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ABSTRACT

This book looks at the current spectrum of programs dealing with education for disadvantaged youth in Thailand. In spite of a lack of literature on the subject, it presents a diversity of information collected from various public and private organizations. The first chapter brings into focus the negative effects of the recent economic crisis, which has aggravated the problems of disadvantaged youth in Thailand. Chapter 2 analyzes the different types of programs aimed at assisting this group and divides these programs into six categories: compensatory programs, basic education programs, vocational training programs, integrated basic/vocational programs, programs for children in especially difficult circumstances, and other types. On this basis, policy and strategy-related recommendations are set out in chapter 3, with a view to accommodating them to the present framework of structural and substantive reforms of the educational system of the country. The book concludes by highlighting the need for a clear-cut coordination of, and linkages between, the various players involved and their respective roles: the development of curricula and activities by the central authorities; a more active involvement of local authorities and communities; and assistance from the private sector both in service and in kind. (Contains 23 tables, 3 graphs, and 28 references.) (Author)

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Education and training strategies for disadvantaged groups in Thailand

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for disadvantaged groups

Education and training strategies for disadvantaged groups in Thailand

Smarnjit Piromruen and Sen Keoyote

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the education of young disadvantaged groups in Thailand. The complexity of the situation is recognized by the fact that two forces occur that underline the courses of change in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the Thai economy enjoyed a record rapid-growth period during the late 1980s and mid-1990s that sent Thailand soaring high in the economic plateau. On the other hand, the Thai economy suddenly plunged into a record low stagnation that forced the country to resort to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for rescue. The problems of the disadvantaged, paradoxically aggravated by the ill effects of the blooming economy prior to 1997, have now become more acute due to the destructive effects of the economic slump after 1997.

At this juncture, the problems are so compounded that it is impossible to separate one situation from another. The best one could do would be to describe and analyze the assistance to the young disadvantaged as it is. This to some extent limits the study in its attempt to shed light on the efforts of the country in coping with the education of the disadvantaged in the aftermath of the economic blow. However, both the change and its effects on the young disadvantaged, and assistance provided to them, are given fair treatment in this report.

Chapter 1 first deals with the socio-economic context of the country and its effects on the young disadvantaged. Two periods of the Thai economy – the one prior to 1997 and the other after 1997 – are looked at, and effects on the young disadvantaged are summarized. Next, the chapter identifies the young disadvantaged and their common problems. The young disadvantaged are further categorized, their geographical distribution indicated and their common difficulties described. The information and analyses in this chapter represent a plethora of detail upon which further information in Chapter 2, concerning how society assists them, is based. Finally, Chapter 3 focuses on the different roles public authorities can play in order to help increase access to education for the disadvantaged.

CHAPTER 1: DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN THAILAND

1. Social and economic context of the country and its effects on the young disadvantaged

(a) The Thai economy prior to 1997 and the overall effect of socio-economic change on the young disadvantaged

The unusually high growth rate of the Thai economy prior to 1996 was accompanied by many social consequences that adversely affected the young disadvantaged, directly and indirectly. First, a resultant structural change from the late 1980s onward benefited the country with a 25.6 per cent contribution to GNP by the industry sector, while agriculture reduced its contribution to 15.1 per cent. The demand for labour soared and the unskilled workers from rural farm areas flocked to newly industrialized urban areas, where environmental and living conditions left much to be desired. This adversely affected the children of these families with respect to home education, food and health.

An overview of the socio-economic changes and how they affected disadvantaged children and youth might be looked at from the following perspectives (The Bangkok Post, 1997-1998 and NEC, 1999).

1) Structural change in the Thai economy

A structural change in the Thai economy in the late 1980s and the early/mid-1990s resulted in a contribution of 25.6 per cent of GNP by the industry sector, while agriculture fell to 15.1 per cent of GNP. The expansion of the industry sector drove the demand for labour upward and resulted in a migration of the labour force from rural farm areas to fill the gap in the industrialized and urban areas. The labour surplus usually found jobs in Bangkok and metropolitan areas where housing construction and large-scale industries were mushrooming and opened opportunities for cheap unskilled labour.

Unfortunately the work places seldom provided decent environments and living conditions. Consequently, children of these families were deprived of decent homes and education. They could little afford decent accommodation, enjoy adequate food, nor maintain good health. In addition, if migrating children found employment at all, they were hired by small-scale enterprises and businesses in the informal system. The economic downturn further aggravated this problem because sizeable numbers of this labour force were laid off and had to return to their home villages. Retraining has had to be provided to returnees who do not have their own land, as well as schooling to their young children. This was phenomenal in 1998, when major industries closed down or at least downsized.

2) Imbalance of income distribution

Social equity is unsatisfactory, especially in the ownership of economic property and income distribution, that has shown a high degree of disparity. This is evidenced by 25 per cent of the population, or almost 15 million, falling below the poverty line. The agricultural sector still dominates in relation to the poverty-stricken group. The family-income gap between the 20 per cent high group and the 20 per cent low group increased from 8 times in 1980 to 12 times over a decade (1982 to 1991). Unfair income distribution and lack of opportunity have led to a consequential effect on children of the poor through their physical, mental and social developmental stages. This deprives these children of social opportunity and becomes a generic social problem that triggers other related problems such as street children, deserted children, child abuse, begging, prostitution, etc.

3) Structural change in population and family

Success in Thailand's attempt to reduce the population size in recent years has led to a steady decline in the number of children, whereas the numbers of youth, middle-aged and elderly show an increase. The family size, however, has become smaller as fewer children are born. Several family types have emerged, such as families with either the father or mother as the bread-winner, families with the bread-winners working in urban areas, and families with the wives staying home alone. Under these conditions, the family heads do not have adequate time to look after their children and provide security to them. Economic difficulties, value changes and lifestyles all weaken the family ties and lead to disintegration of the family unit. Divorces soared from 24,922 cases in 1980 to 40,875 cases in 1989, or an increase of about 64 per cent over the decade. Children of divorced families are emotionally disturbed and are often driven adrift from home as wanderers, delinquents, or children with pervasive behaviours such as loitering, drug addiction, crime, prostitution, or begging.

4) Sociological change and change in values and lifestyle

Industrialization and urbanization have been associated with adverse sociological and cultural effects upon the Thai people. As materialistic development is paramount in the new society, making a living is highly competitive and often deprives parents of time to care for their children. The society is highly susceptible to foreign culture due to the lack of social mechanisms to sieve out what is unwanted or to inculcate in children an ability to make judgements. Many problems of youth manifest themselves in gambling, drug addiction, prostitution and illegal dealings. A consequence of these adverse behaviours is found in cases of illegal pregnancy, baby abandonment, and HIV infection that are becoming more and more severe.

(b) The Thai economy since 1997 and its effect on the young disadvantaged

The economic downturn after mid-1996 further aggravated these problems, when sizeable numbers of the migrated labour force were laid off and returned to their home villages. Further problems include an imbalance of income distribution with 25 per cent of the population, or almost 15 million, falling below the poverty line.

1) General description of the economy under crisis

After years of rapid growth, the Thai economy started to slow down in the mid-1990s. While the growth rate in the first half of 1996 was still considered attractive, major economic indicators showed a mediocre GDP growth of 6.4 per cent with an inflation rate of 5.9 per cent. External accounts showed 1,378.9 billion baht of exports and 1,796.5 billion baht of imports. Balance of payments was 54.6 billion baht and office foreign reserves were US$38.7 billion, while external debt was US$89.8 billion and the government cash balance was at 104.3 billion baht. The first half of 1997 saw Thailand with a domestic production slowdown. For example, food production increased at a mere 3.8 per cent compared with 11 per cent in the same period of the previous year; textiles and clothing decreased by 5 per cent, and automobiles and motorcycles by 3.7 per cent. Shipments of agricultural products decreased by 12.2 per cent and agricultural industry products by 9.5 per cent. The exception was only in petroleum products that surpassed 35 per cent, brought on by the expansion of new refineries.

Private investment continued to ease back because of slow growth in exports, the slump in domestic demand, the oversupply of property, a tight money market with high interest rates and a lack of confidence in government policies. It was the first year that the government had a budget deficit after nine years of surplus. Low prices of some farm products prompted protests and stop-gap solutions, with long-term questions unanswered, thus necessitating committee intervention to raise the domestic prices of 16 agricultural products in an attempt to prevent more damaging rallies.

Performance across the financial sector was poor and the government was prompted to encourage bank mergers that also triggered investor non-confidence and worries that principally rested in business meltdown in the property sector, the financial sector crisis caused by a mountain of non-performing loans, and pressure on the baht. After the general election in November 1996, the economy increasingly worsened. Thailand's investment trend continued to decline in the first six months of 1997 because of the economic slowdown and the flight of foreign investors to countries with lower wages for labour-intensive industries.

The relocation of foreign investors to emerging economies such as China and Viet Nam, and the drop in foreign investment, have aggravated the country's investment slump as local manufacturers ran short of funds for expansion. Their difficulties were compounded by high interest rates as the government tightened its monetary policy in a bid to keep inflation and current-account deficit under control. Hence Thailand saw foreign investors in light industries such as textiles, toys and shoes continue their migration from Thailand to other countries. Another phenomenon also occurred in small and medium-scale suppliers of parts to major manufacturers, who left their current locations to follow large firms. Fortunately, some industries still retained their competitiveness, such as the automobile and vehicle parts and the electronic industries (NEC, 1999).

2) Deficits and unemployment

The deterioration of the internal economy that led to a national crisis might be illustrated by the steady increase of foreign trade and service imbalance over the past 10 years. The deficits reached 370 thousand million baht in 1996 and reserved funds dropped from almost US$40 million in 1996 to US$2.3 million in 1997, when the government decided to resort to the IMF for rescue. Stringent conditions imposed by the IMF, such as increasing taxation and a budget cutback, only served to trigger an economic deflation together with inflation. Some of the effects of this economic slump on the disadvantaged young include, for example, a decrease in real income, dissolution or down-sizing of 10,000 business firms, lay-off of several hundred thousand employees, and unemployment of several hundred thousand new graduates. By the end of 1998, there was an estimate of some 2 million unemployed accumulating over the year – apparently the highest on record. *Table 1* indicates this unemployment crisis (NEC, 1999).

Table 1. Number of unemployed distributed by latest occupation prior to lay-off *(in thousands)*

Latest occupation prior to lay-off	1996	1997	1998
Professional	9.4	12.7	34.8
Administrative	0.9	0.4	8.2
Clerk	10.6	19.0	67.0
Vending	17.8	33.5	61.9
Farming	289.4	279.8	478.1
Transportation	16.4	24.2	44.1
Crafts/labour	165.1	171.4	579.5
Service	36.9	26.9	51.1
Others	0.2	-	0.8
Total	**546.7**	**567.9**	**1 325.5**

Source: National Statistical Office. February 1996-1998. *Survey of Employment First Round.*

Some good signs were noted, however, before the year 1997 ended. The passing of the new Constitution promised an election and new hope for a government that would be more concerned about national interest. The new government's economic team contributed

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to the restructuring the finance sector. Finally, Thai exports increased with the depreciation of the baht, accompanied by the improved trade balance that promised to continue.

3) Causes of economic crisis

The main reasons for the economic crisis in 1997, or, as they put it: 'The bubble finally burst' were (The Bangkok Post, 1998):

- *Huge deficits* in the current account that caused the country to rely heavily on external borrowing.
- *Excessive external debt,* about 55.5 per cent of GDP, sharply lifted the country's debt service ratio thus offsetting liabilities of non-finance sector companies.
- *Collapse of the property sector*: By 1995, an oversupply of housing emerged, expanding into a major problem. With loans increasingly expensive and hard to get under the central bank's squeeze on lending, the sector began to collapse in 1996. Also, many finance companies and some small banks faced liquidity problems, and 56 were closed permanently in December 1997.
- *Exchange rate mismanagement*: With a fixed exchange rate and the liberalization of international capital flows, foreign money poured in between 1993 and 1996. The baht became overvalued against other currencies, partly slowing down growth in exports for 1996. Speculators attacked the baht in early 1997, forcing the central bank to resort to the use of official foreign reserves.
- *Political instability,* incompetence and negligence caused confidence of foreign and domestic investors to slip away.

The above-mentioned factors were summarized by some critiques as the economic and social phenomena fundamental to the late crisis (NEC, 1999):

- Too much emphasis was placed on foreign investment, foreign trade and gross domestic product (GDP) rather than on human resources, redistribution of wealth and redistribution of income for life quality of the populace. This resulted in an accumulation of foreign debts and trade imbalances that only further aggravated the socio-economic disparity among Thai people.
- Concentration of economic and political structure in the wealthy elite, in the absence of fair distribution and democratic participation by the mass, resulted in economic imbalances and resource abuse. Too high proportions of foreign loans were abused by wealthy bankers and large-scaled business firms on stock market and insufficiently profitable investments. Without adequate and effective control by the central bank, the unrealistic unbalanced growth of the economy was driven steadily to an irreparable crisis.
- Politics and governments were also cited as major factors conducive to the recent economic crisis. Leaders were blamed for a lack of vision, administrative insufficiency, and a high degree of corruption. Education was also attacked for being outdated, irrelevant, and not enhancing critical thinking. The lack of managerial skills, science and technology was the part of education that was heavily criticized. But evidence was only general as there were no empirical data to support this notion.

4) Adverse effects on disadvantaged children

Apparent effects on disadvantaged children could be seen in three respects (Ministry of Education, 1998). First, as several thousands of parents from rural areas who found employment in areas surrounding Bangkok were laid off and had to return to their home provinces, their children had to be relocated in new schools back in their home provinces or elsewhere that they chose to live. This would mean new adjustment for them psychologically and educationally. Second, income loss resulted in the inability to afford schooling both in the payment of tuition fees and daily expenses. Without assistance in the form of educational loans or relaxation of fees payment, these children would have to discontinue schooling. Third, even those who were already supported by way of scholarships and the like, often found the diminishing value of the money they were provided inadequate and thus had to resort to additional help. This was the case when dealing with educational loans, described in *Chapter 2*.

(c) School drop-out and major factors associated with it

A cohort study of the group first enrolled for formal schooling from Primary 1 in 1992 shows a drop-out of nearly 300,000 from primary school, and by the year 2000 more than 300,000 would further drop out from secondary school. The retention rate of the 1986 cohort was satisfactory (82.5 per cent) at the primary level, but was very unsatisfactory (32.9 per cent) at the secondary level. The retention was a record lowest for the 1989 cohort (68.0 per cent), although it increased again (to 75.0 per cent) for the 1992 cohort. It is expected that the 12-year retention will rise to 42.0 per cent in the year 2000 for this cohort. As the percentage of children not enrolled in upper-secondary classes was high during the period 1996-1998 (over 50 per cent), it is expected that this will remain high beyond the year 2000. Major problems associated with drop-outs involve demographic, family, socio-economic status, school-related, behavioural, and psychological factors. In view of the fact that these factors are inseparable, a preventive programme should be diverse and differential to cater to the needs of the various groups.

1) Drop-out as implied by enrolment gaps

Table 2 shows that among 1,344 million pupils who first enrolled in Primary 1 in 1986, only 441 million stayed on to Secondary 6 in 1997, hence showing a retention rate of merely 32.9 per cent. The retention rate for the 1989 cohort (1,257,803 pupils) would be better, that is, going up to 42.0 per cent when 528 million of them would remain in school in the year 2000. These rates are expected to be somewhat higher when enrolment in non-formal classes is taken into account; but here it refers to formal schooling for everybody on equal access. Based on these statistics, it was believed that the cohort of 1986 alone showed a vast number of disadvantaged young who were deprived, one way or another, of 12 years of basic formal education to which they were entitled by the new legislation. They represented some 800,000 to 900,000 children and youth that are now already participating in the political, economic and social arenas of the country. This is to a large degree in concurrence with a finding of the Office of the National Education Commission that shows an average educational attainment of the Thai people equivalent to 5.4 years (NEC, 1996).

A further look at school attendance at the primary level (from Primary 1 to Primary 6) showed a steady rise from the beginning, but a sharp drop since 1992 to a record low of about 68 per cent in 1994, then a rise again to 75 per cent in 1997. Over the period 1996-1998, the performance of the system was somewhat better at the secondary level, when the retention rate was almost stable at 82.0 per cent over the same period. Nonetheless, for the Primary 1 cohort of 1986, some 240,000 students had not completed secondary education. The figure increased to 300,000 for the Primary 1 cohort of 1989.

A framework useful for monitoring the quantitative outputs of the national education system, as in *Table 3*, shows the size of population in each age group, that is, 3-5 years, 6-11 years, 12-14 years, and 15-17 years; and the number of pupils enrolled in the educational level corresponding to each age group. The percentage is then calculated as an example of school attendance based on the reference group, although the actual age ranges of those attending school are wider, such as 5-13 years compared to 6-11 years for primary grades.

Table 2. School retention rates for the period 1986-2000

Year	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Primary															
P.1	1,344,302			1,257,803			1,195,740								
P.2		1,194,655			1,184,208			1,089,420							
P.3			1,171,372			1,146,040			1,045,178						
P.4				1,147,430			1,126,040			993,922					
P.5					1,119,383			1,114,540			984,684				
P.6						1,108,378			1,061,670			896,800			
6-year retention [%]						82.5			68.0			75.0			
Year	**1986**	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**
Secondary															
M.1							682,928			854,705					
M.2								661,989			821,280			*794,880*	
M.3									639,828			*794,880*			*N/A*
M.4										538,638			*683,590*		
M.5											483,977			*N/A*	
M.6												*441, 680*			*528,270*
6-year retention [%]												82.0			*82.0*
12-year retention [%]												32.9			*42.0*
Year	**1986**	**1987**	**1988**	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**

Sources: Statistics of Ministry of Education and National Education Commission.

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Table 3. Gross educational indicators pre-primary to secondary education, school years 1996-1998

P.6/M.1 M.3/M.4	**Pre-primary**	**Primary**	**Lower secondary**	**Upper secondary**
Age group (years)	**3-5**	**6-11**	**12-14**	**15-17**
School year 1996:				
Age group	3,220,000	6,565,000	3,421,000	3,480,000
Enrolment	2,523,243	5,908,902	2,445,856	1,479,236
Enrolment as percentage of age group	78.36	90.01	71.50	42.51
School year 1997:				
Age group	3,202,000	6,539,000	3,395,000	3,464,000
Enrolment	2,906,721	5,927,940	2,462,631	1,620,434
Enrolment as percentage of age group	90.78	90.66	72.54	46.77
School year 1998:				
Age group	3,192,000	6,497,000	3,364,000	3,440,000
Enrolment	2,771,372	5,892,007	2,424,263	1,696,361
Enrolment as percentage of age group	86.82	90.69	72.06	49.31

For pre-school, the percentage fluctuated over the years and showed no apparent patterns. For primary school, the percentage was quite consistently high at about 90. For lower secondary, it was moderately high at 71-72 per cent and showed a slightly increasing trend. For upper secondary, it rose steadily over the three-year period from a low of 42.5 per cent in 1996 to 49.3 per cent in 1998. Apparently, a good proportion of disadvantaged children need assistance at the secondary level to enable them to attain 12 years of basic education.

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Whereas the number of all age groups steadily decreased over the years, as in *Table 4*, the enrolment fluctuated at the early levels, except at the upper-secondary level, where the number increased steadily, albeit at an unsatisfactory pace as the percentage of non-attendants remained high at the secondary level. In sum, more than one out of four children missed lower-secondary school, and almost one out of two missed upper secondary.

Table 4. Numbers not attending formal school, pre-primary to secondary education school years 1996-1998

	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
Age group (years)	**3-5**	**6-11**	**12-14**	**15-17**
School year 1996:				
Age group	3,220,000	6,565,000	3,421,000	3,480,000
Enrolment	2,523,200	5,908,900	2,445,900	1,479,200
Not Enrolled	697,800	657,100	975,100	1,900,800
As percentage of age group	21.6	10.0	28.5	57.5
School year 1997:				
Age group	3,202,000	6,539,000	3,395,000	3,464,000
Enrolment	2,906,700	5,927,900	2,462,600	1,620,400
Not Enrolled	296,300,800	611,100	933,400	1,843,600
As percentage of age group	9.2	9.3	27.5	53.3
School year 1998:				
Age group	3,192,000	6,497,000	3,364,000	3,440,000
Enrolment group	2,771,400	5,892,000	2,424,300	1,696,400
Not enrolled	420,600	605,000	934,700	1,744,600
As percentage of age group	13.2	9.3	27.9	50.7

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It is probable that the estimated total number of children not enrolled in school would register as an important area for research on the disadvantaged young, especially for the school-age groups of 6-17 years. *Table 5* summarizes the number of children not enrolled in the period 1996-98. Whereas the aggregate number kept declining over the years, the gap remained very large and prompted one to ask how the formal and non-formal systems coped with this. Some two and a quarter million disadvantaged children seemed to pose an impossible task for the public and private sectors alike.

Table 5. Total number of children not attending school, years 1996-1998

	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Total
Not enrolled 1996	657,100	975,100	1,900,800	3,533,000
Not enrolled 1997	611,100	933,400	1,843,600	2,387,100
Not enrolled 1998	605,000	939,700	1,744,600	2,289,300

Source: Office of the National Education Commission.

2) Main factors associated with school drop-out

An earlier study on lower secondary school drop-out (Department of General Education, 1995) showed a total of 730,459 students dropping out of Secondary 1- 3, which accounted for 3.22 per cent of all students attending school at the beginning of the year. Two major factors associated with this included poverty (14.69 per cent) and earnings (34.12 per cent), which were not entirely independent. Only a negligible percentage (0.09 per cent) indicated a negative attitude towards education.

A more recent study on lower-secondary school drop-out (Ministry of Education, 1997) revealed findings that might shed light on factors associated with this phenomenon. Twenty-four variables were grouped into six factors, namely, demographic, family, socio-economic status, school-related, behavioural, and psychological factors. Presented hereunder is a summary of the findings.

- *The demographic factor* – having to do with sex, age, having one parent, and being a minority group – was influential in school drop-out, particularly when the child had only one parent.
- *The family factor* – having to do with home environment, family support, and attitude towards education – was a predictor of school drop-out, especially when the home environment was unfavourable.
- *The socio-economic factor* – having to do with parental occupation, parental educational attainment, family income, and assisting the family – was mildly associated with school drop-out and might not be the real cause.
- *The school factor* – involving school transfer, failure, homework, school safety, suspense, and grades – was strong, particularly when safety was a problem.
- *The psychological factor* – involving intelligence, attitude towards learning, attitude towards school, learning satisfaction, and school boredom – was generally associated with school drop-out, particularly when satisfaction with learning was low, while the influence of other variables was also evident.

The study provided some evidence of the influence of a mixture of factors that are inseparable and cannot be explained in a simplified cause-and-effect fashion. A preventive programme, likewise, may not be straightforward, but may entail a diversity of activities directed towards various target groups. For that matter, some practices are suggested such as individualized information on the causes of drop-out, concerted efforts of several agencies to make use of their expertise, and strengthening of the counselling services.

2. Identification of the young disadvantaged and their common problems

(a) Common difficulties faced by the young disadvantaged

Disadvantaged children of all types share the same kinds of problems. Typically the problems are associated with poor physical health due to inadequate nutrition and very basic accommodation; mental health by way of slow emotional and social growth rates; schooling or lack of educational opportunity; inadequate self-development; and deprivation of fundamental services which include the rights to have access and use of educative preventive, protective and rehabilitative services.

Moreover, these problems are faced by these children while they are still very young and helpless, and they are further victimized by circumstances. The problems include the following:

- *Physical health:* Disadvantaged children do not have adequate nutrition and a decent home. Hence they are subjected to high risks of malnutrition and ill health. They are mostly susceptible to skin diseases, digestive infections and dental diseases.
- *Mental health:* Some children have low mental health and slow emotional and social growth rates. These pose an impediment to becoming well-developed adults.
- *Schooling:* Disadvantaged children are often deprived of educational opportunity due to poverty, accompanied by living conditions hardly conducive to learning. When they grow older they are inadequately equipped to live as full members of society.
- *Self-development:* Disadvantaged children are not only deprived of schooling, but also of self-development in all its aspects, due to the necessity to find work at a young age, or the fact that they are homeless and not too well taken care of. They can hardly achieve their growth potentials.

- *Fundamental services:* Disadvantaged children are deprived of fundamental services such as public utilities, transportation, job opportunities, recreation, and so forth. This adversely affects not only their normal way of life, but also their personalities and social adjustment as decent citizens of the country. Their legal rights, for example, are at stake and hence they become a powerless group and sometimes even a burden on society. Delinquency and helplessness are manifestations when they are young, leading to crime and socio-economic burden when they become adults, unprepared and unequipped for normal life.

These problems are viewed by most people as symptomatic and phenomenal in association with the disadvantaged. On the other hand, they may also be seen by others as the causes of disadvantage. No matter how one looks at these problems, timely remedies need to be provided so that this society can become peaceful and a vehicle for positive and fruitful change.

(b) Types of young disadvantaged

Disadvantaged children refer to those who are deprived of opportunities for normal development. Three groups may be classified as disadvantaged children, namely: children of poverty-stricken families, children under especially difficult circumstances and children of minority groups. Handicapped children are excluded from this study.

Children of poverty-stricken families are generally identified by low family incomes. For educational purposes, an income of less than 300,000 baht a year is considered low and meets a criteria for government assistance. School drop-outs generally belong to families whose income falls below this dividing line, although the factors associated with school drop-outs are many.

Children under especially difficult circumstances are diverse in nature. Typically they are abandoned children, homeless children, and working children at a young age:

- *Abandoned children:* These live on their own over a lengthy period of time, perhaps all their life, with no basic-needs care from any individual, group or institution. If the situation persists, they will not grow up with normal physical, mental and social development. Most of these children are up to five years of age and can be found in 25 public and about 20 private welfare institutions.
- *Homeless children:* These move around from one place to another without a permanent home, or work on their own at some risk of crime or misconduct. Institutions and agencies working directly with these homeless children include the Department of Public Welfare, local police and tourist police.
- *Working children:* Working children are employed or work independently for life subsistence or in support of their family. They include children in the industry, service and agriculture sectors, but not those who live by begging for food or for money. They can be found in all urban areas where businesses are clustering together with some degree of concentration.

Children of the minorities may also be regarded as another group with problems of their own.

(c) Locating the young disadvantaged

Due to house registration problems, it is thought that the proportion of disadvantaged children is far greater in rural areas than urban areas, as many children migrate with their parents. An actual survey of urban/rural dwellers is needed for policy intervention.

Regional data are useful in highlighting the nature of disadvantaged groups. In the north-east, people are generally poor and need high priority in the schooling of their children. Some even migrate to other more industrialized areas of the country and follow-up measures have to be sought to provide adequate education to their youngsters. In the north, the proportion of the poor is smaller, but there exist hill-tribe people that are socially disadvantaged in matters such as lifestyle and spoken language. Some social ills also plague sizeable groups of people in the region, and many youngsters fall prey to such problems as prostitution, drug addiction and HIV infection. In the south and central Thailand, where the economy is generally more favourable, the disadvantaged young are affected to a lesser degree. Unless current data bend, this general pattern of disadvantage seems to exist over time.

1) Demographic and social strata of Thai children aged 3 to 17 years

As in *Table 6*, statistics and estimates of Thai children aged 3 to 17 years in 1996 show a total population of 16,636,000, of whom 12,357,708 (or 74.28 per cent) were in formal school and 4,278,292 (or 25.72 per cent) in non-formal school. Of those in non-formal school, some 784,326 children or 18.33 per cent (aged 12 to 17 years) were attending literacy classes and some 1,422,700 or 33.25 per cent (also aged 12 to 17 years) were employed. Of the remaining 2,080,000 children or so, about 1.1 million could be identified as belonging to the real disadvantaged groups.

Table 6. Child population aged 3-17 years in 1996

	Number	**Percentage**
In formal school	12,357,974	74.28
Out of formal school	4,287,026	25.72
Attending literacy classes (age 12-17 years)	*784,326*	*18.33*
In employment (age 12-17 years)	*1,422,700*	*33.25*
Neither attending school nor employed	*2,071,266*	*48.42*
Total population aged 3-17 years	16,636,000	100.00

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The percentages of various categories as estimated by responsible public organizations are shown in *Table* 7. The greatest number (467,671) were the disabled, followed by the homeless (371,909) and child prostitutes (some 40,000-60,000), children of construction labourers (30,000), drug addicts (24,780) and children in patronage homes (23,119). These do not include 211,289 children of the minority groups. A sizeable number could not be traced.

Table 7. Children neither attending school nor employed

Age groups (years)	3-5	6-11	12-14	15-17	Total
In patronage homes	-	-	-	23,119	23,119
Child prostitutes	-	-	-	40,000-60,000	50,000
Homeless	-	-	-	371,909	371,909
Disabled	-	-	-	467,671	467,671
HIV infected	737	55	2	107	901
Drug addicts	-	-	-	24,780	24,780
Children of labourers	-	-	-	30,300	30,300
Sub-total	737	55	2	912,806	968,680
Unidentified					1,111,320
Total					2,080,000

Source: Department of Social Welfare. 1998. *Annual Report.*

2) Distribution of disadvantaged children by geographical area

No direct statistics are available as for the number of disadvantaged children by region. The number might be indicated by enrolments of students in formal and non-formal school programmes across the country. Statistics of five sources were compiled and aggregated numbers and percentages calculated (see *Table 8* below). The limitation of this exercise was at least threefold. First, not all students enrolled were absolutely poor, as some families might have chosen the programmes for their children on the basis of proximity only.

Second, a good number of poor students just did not choose the programmes and hence they became missing data. Finally, statistics were not uniformly based on the same year and hence they might not represent a true regional distribution.

Table 8. Number and percentage of children attending schools for the disadvantaged by region

	ONPEC 1998	DGE 1998	DOVE 1998-99	OPEC 1998	NFD 1997	Aggregate number	%
North	209,654	9,825	15,230	10,080	315,439	560,228	10.0
North-east	1,214,411	7,226	22,771	9,723	1,030,823	2,284,954	40.7
South	323,449	3,958	9,390	14,127	484,519	835,443	14.9
Central	718,932	7,641	11,510	22,308	894,499	1,654,890	29.4
Bangkok	-	1,985	-	6,375	269,880	278,240	5.0
Total	2,466,446	30,635	58,901	62,613	2,995,160	5,613,755	100.0
%	43.9	0.5	1.1	1.1	53.4	100.0	

ONPEC – Office of the National Primary Education Commission. Enrolments in extended secondary classes in existing primary schools in the school year 1998, as contained in *Educational Basic Information 1998* compiled by Policy and Planning Office, ONPEC.

DGE – Department of General Education. Enrolments in patronized schools in the school year 1998, as contained in *Number of classrooms, students, teachers and janitors in schools under Special Education Division, school year 1998.*

DOVE – Department of Vocational Education. Actual enrolments in the Agricultural Study Programme in the school year 1998 and planned enrolments in the Agricultural Education for Rural Development Programme for the school year 1999.

OPEC – Office of the Private Education Commission. Enrolments in subsidized schools in the school year 1998.

NFD – Non-formal Education Department. *Non-formal education statistics, fiscal year 1997.*

The largest percentage of disadvantaged school-aged children (40.7 per cent) were in the north-east and the second-largest percentage (29.4 per cent) were in the central region of the country. Smaller percentages were in the south (14.9 per cent) and the north (10.0 per cent). The majority of these children were in learning facilities organized by offices of non-formal education (53.4 per cent) and in secondary classes of 'opportunity schools' under the provincial offices of primary education (43.9 per cent). Only a small proportion (2.7 per cent) were in other institutions.

CHAPTER 2: PROGRAMMES IN FAVOUR OF THE YOUNG DISADVANTAGED

Chapter 2 deals with programmes classified by salient features, and summarizes which organizations offer such programmes and how. For each programme category, attempts are made to report large-scale activities that are supported by legislation and operated by public organizations. Other small-scale programmes are compiled as special assistance to children under difficult circumstances.

Six basic categories of programmes by their salient features are described in this chapter. They include compensatory, basic education, vocational training, basic/vocational integrated programmes, programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances and other types of programmes. Definitions of the programmes are offered below.

- *Compensatory programmes* refer to those representing attempts to compensate for what the students do not have, or what the parents cannot afford, or income foregone (for some groups of parents), etc.
- *Basic education programmes* refer to those representing attempts to upgrade the standard levels of learning, that is: levels 1,2,3,4 and 5 corresponding to basic functional literacy, lower primary, upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, respectively.
- *Vocational training programmes* refer to those representing attempts to provide basic or semi-skilled training to learners, as well as customized courses as required by specific jobs or under specific projects.
- *Basic/vocational integrated programmes* refer to those representing attempts to integrate basic and vocational learning for students who miss the opportunity in formal schooling, or for adult learners who drop back to class with a view to upgrading their level of education.

- *Programmes for children under especially difficult circumstances* refer to those tailored to the specific needs of these children.
- *Other types of programmes* refer to other forms of programmes that serve specific groups and purposes such as functional literacy, post-school literacy, distance learning, etc.

1. Compensatory programmes

The salient features of compensatory programmes are diverse. Apart from free offerings such as school lunch and supplementary food, they can also be in the form of educational loans and scholarships. The aims of these programmes are to enable disadvantaged children to attend school while maintaining decent health and living conditions. Large-scaled regular programmes are sponsored or operated by public organizations, mainly, the Ministry of Education; whereas small-scaled programmes are provided for children under especially difficult circumstances, such as maltreated children, child prostitutes, and abandoned children. More than two and a half million children benefit from large-scaled programmes and hundreds of thousands from medium-sized programmes.

(a) Programmes by the Ministry of Education

Several departments of the Ministry of Education offer compensatory programmes to disadvantaged children. Some programmes are solely operated by the individual departments, whereas others overlap responsibilities of two or more departments.

1) School Lunch programme

The School Lunch programme dates back to 1952, in the Ministry of Education, and since then other organizations have followed suit. The activities became more intensive and diverse in the early 1980s in primary schools under the jurisdiction of the Office of National

Primary Education Commission as a viable component of the primary health care programme. By 1992 legislation on a lunch programme fund for primary schools was passed by parliament and since then primary schools across the country have been provided annual budgets for their needy pupils. The total amount of the fund would reach 6 billion baht in about 10 years, but only the interests and dividends of the fund may be allocated to the schools for this purpose.

Two additional sources of funds for the School Lunch programme are subsidies for pre-primary and primary pupils and budget money classified as sundries. *Table 9* summarizes sources of funds by fiscal year between the period 1992-1999. It is worthy of note that the interest on the school lunch fund was not available until 1995, and it now stands at about 10 per cent of the capital, which is about 5 billion baht in 1999 (figure not shown in the table).

Table 9. Budget allocation by source of funds, fiscal years 1992-1999

Fiscal year	Subsidy	School Lunch Fund	Sundries	Total
1992	30,000,000	-	-	30,000,000
1993	219,999,820	-	-	219,999,820
1994	1,372,999,360	-	-	1,372,799,360
1995	2,071,602,500	75,000,000	-	2,146,602,500
1996	2,129,300,000	156,036,500	6,130,000	2,291,466,500
1997	2,155,954,000	256,000,000	461,700	2,412,415,700
1998	2,591,300,000	520,000,000	330,900	2,611,639,900
1999	2,021,270,000	500,000,000	339,900	2,521,609,900

Source: Ministry of Education. 1999. *Lunch programme in primary schools.* Status report.

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Table 10 corresponds to *Table 9* in respect of the number of students who were recipients of the School Lunch programme within the same period. The numbers for fiscal years 1995 to 1999 represented students in the second half of the year (May to September). They were actual numbers and fluctuated over the years between 2,173,767 and 2,521,270 students per semester. Basically, three types of disadvantaged children are included, namely: all children in remote and 'hardship' areas, children in patronized schools, and children in any other schools who cannot afford lunch.

Table 10. Number of students in the School Lunch programme, fiscal years 1992-1999

Fiscal year	Pre-school children	Primary grade students	Total
1992	-	491,320	491,320
1993	377,358	452,830	830,188
1994	308,257	1,023,925	1,332,182
1995	524,962	1,648,805	2,173,767
1996	575,000	1,767,703	2,342,703
1997	642,908	1,749,395	2,392,203
1998	642,618	1,539,235	2,181,853
1999	687,942	1,833,328	2,521,270

Source: Ministry of Education. *Lunch programme in primary schools*. Status report, 1999.

The *pro forma* rate is 5 baht per day per head for 200 days a year, or 1,000 baht per head per year. The money, in amounts proportional to the numbers of disadvantaged children, is given to the school with the power to spend the money in whatever way it deems suitable. Typical activities include buying fresh food for cooking, hiring outside individuals to prepare the meal, and buying kitchenware necessary for food preparation. Monitoring and evaluation of the programme is also conducted to assess the background and readiness of the schools, their managerial capacity and their accomplishments.

Target groups are identified on the basis of the malnutrition criteria set forth by the Ministry of Public Health. Students in private schools operated by the Buddhist temples are also included in the programme. Essentially, the campaign does not only alleviate the students' physical problems, but also enhances their learning.

A follow-up study of budget allocation to students in public and private schools in the first half of fiscal year 1996 (1 October 1995 – 31 March 1996), as in *Table 11,* showed that about half of needy pupils were assisted by this programme at a total cost of 827,485,000 million baht. Checking this against the figures in *Tables 9* and *10*, one finds a difference of some 700,000 students at a cost of an additional 465 million baht.

Table 11. Budget allocation for School Lunch programme, first half-year allotment, FY 1996

Jurisdiction	**Number of students**		**Sources of funds**		
	Needy	**Served**	**Subsidy**	**SL programme**	**Total**
ONPEC	3,167,373	1,519,888	751,974,500	7,969,500	759,944,000
OPEC	90,558	49,220	-	24,610,000	24,610,000
DRA	-	-	-	9,398,000	9,398,000
BPP	18,796	18,796	-	-	-
PMO	116,937	58,466	-	29,233,000	29,233,000
Bangkok	6,598	6,598	-	3,299,000	3,299,000
Other	-	2,002	-	-	1,001,000
Total	**3,400,262**	**1,654,970**	**751,974,500**	**74,509,500**	**827,485,000**

Source: Priyaporn Yanachai. ***Report of School Lunch programme.*** Office of the Private Education Commission, fiscal years 1996-1997.

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ONPEC:	Office of the National Primary Education Commission
OPEC:	Office of the Private Education Commission
DRA:	Department of Religious Affairs
BPP:	Border Patrol Police
PMO:	Provincial Municipality Offices

This illustrates that to serve all 3,400,000 needy students, the government would need an addition of some 1,110 million baht at a cost of about 1,000 baht per head. But this would not necessarily mean a sizeable increment in the School Lunch programme reserve fund, since the Office of the National Primary Education Commission is already allocated some 750 million baht annually through a regular subsidy programme of its own.

2) Supplementary Food programme

Malnutrition is an acute problem in children that adversely affects their physical, mental, emotional and social growth. The cause of the problem finds its root in insufficient or inadequate food consumption that results in retarded bodily and intelligent development. For very young children, milk is the form of natural food that is most complete in nutritious values compared with other foods.

The government effort aims at the target groups in Primary 1-4 to provide at least 200 ccs. of milk for a duration of 200 days throughout the year while schools are open. The objective is to raise the height and weight of at least 80 per cent of the target groups to meet the standard set forth by the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH). The results of this effort are quite impressive, as indicated by statistics. Prior to the programme, the average height gain was 2 cms per year. When the programme was implemented, the gain was 5 cms. Malnutrition rate decreased from 19 per cent in 1990 to 14 per cent in 1992, which was the starting year, and to 11 per cent in 1997.

Milk is provided in three basic types – pasteurized, UHT and powder milk – all of which have to pass the MOPH standards. There was a pilot project in the school year 1998 on the use of unsweetened condensed milk in a northern province where delivery of fresh milk was difficult, and where the contract with a local agricultural college did not succeed. Unfortunately, information on evaluation of the project was not available.

The effort of the government in providing milk as supplementary food to young children with the malnutrition syndrome is indicated in *Table 12*. One notes that a vigorous approach has been adopted since the programme's inception in 1992. Both the budget figures and the numbers of recipients increased quite sharply starting from 1995. In the fiscal year 1999, the aggregated number of pre-school and primary graders was 4,845,330 at a total budget of 4,403,708,500 baht. Primary graders alone accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the aggregated number. The cost per head also increased from 4 baht each to 5 baht, small but significant, as the market price of milk went up over the years.

Table 12.Budget allocation and number of pupils in Supplementary Food (Milk) programme, 1992-1999

Fiscal year	Budget allocation	Cost per head	Number of pupils		
			Pre-school	Primary	Total
1992	278,650,000	2	696,625	-	696,625
1993	343,050,000	4	857,526	-	857,526
1994	1,070,070,000	4	1,367,000	-	1,367,000
1995	1,531,969,000	4	1,571,000	891,921	2,462,921
1996	2,159,310,000	4	1,480,000	1,801,377	3,281,377
1997	3,501,052,000	5	1,556,495	2,460,192	4,016,687
1998	4,300,410,00	5	1,684,069	2,369,825	4,053,894
1999	4,403,708,500	5	n/a	n/a	4,845,330

Source: Office of the National Primary Education Commission, 1999. Mimeographed paper for internal circulation.

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3) Educational loans and scholarships

Three types of loans exist as joint responsibilities of several departments. First is the Government Loan Fund for Education for students in secondary and post-secondary education institutions. Second is the Asian Development Bank Loan Fund or the 'Economic Crisis Relief Loan Fund' provided to children of parents who were laid off or who were faced with financial problems in the late 1990s. Third is an assortment of financial assistance or scholarships provided to students under the auspices of private groups.

Government Loan Fund

The fund is operated under the oversight of three ministries: Finance, Education, and University Affairs. While the first of the two accounts are operated by the Ministry of Education, eligible students are not confined to the institutions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry. The Government Loan Fund was established by cabinet resolution at its meeting on 28 March, 1995 and became effective in the school year 1996. The principal objective of the loan fund is to provide educational loans to students from low-income families, to enable them to continue upper secondary and pursue post-secondary education, including continuing education. Recipients are to pay back, with low interest, upon completion of school.

The family income ceiling set forth for eligibility of the loan is 300,000 baht per annum, which applies to guardians as well. The applicant must be a *bona fide* student in a recognized institution. The fund does not allow employment while attending school or college, neither does it allow holding of a degree, although it accepts married applicants. Legitimate costs to be covered by the loan include fees collected by the institution; educational costs incurred by the purchase of textbooks, equipment and the like; and living expenses such as dormitory accommodation and clothing. While school and accommodation fees are paid directly to the institution, the balance of the loan is deposited in the student's own account.

The amounts of the loan are not to exceed 55,440 baht for the upper-secondary level; 62,500 baht for the lower vocational certificate; 70,240 baht for the diploma; and 100,000 baht for the bachelor degree. Repayment commences after a two years' grace period after completion of the study programme, with an amortization schedule of 15 years. *Table 13* indicates the cost figures of the types of expenses applicable to the loan.

Table 13. Expenses applicable to government loans, academic year 1999

Level of education	Tuition	Education-related expenses	Accommodation	Personal allowances	Total
Upper secondary	8,000	-	-	12,000	20,000
Vocational certificate	12,000	4,000	12,000	12,000	40,000
Vocational diploma	18,000	4,000	12,000	24,000	58,000
Bachelor degree	18,000	6,000	12,000	24,000	60,000

Source: Ministry of Education. 1998. *Operati[illegible] Manual for the Government Loan Fund.*

The number of recipients of the loan in 1997 increased from 131,168 to 408,894 over the previous year, and the loan amount increased from 2,665,120,440 baht to 7,597,687,707 baht, or more than twice as much. Of these recipients, about 92,263 were old cases and 278,875 were new. The status of the loan by the end of fiscal year 1998 showed a total of 237,845 recipients at 4,000 billion baht, whereas some 189,000 students were awaiting approval and award of the loan at an additional 4,914 billion baht. *Table 14* summarizes this situation.

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Table 14. Recipients and candidates of government loan, fiscal year 1998

Jurisdiction	Recipients	Loan amount	Candidates	Required loan
MOE Bangkok	13,455	526,925,925	6,234	267,078,565
MOE provinces	203,466	3,434,032,720	182,793	4,647,185,256
Others Bangkok	924	39,041,355	-	-
Total	**237,845**	**4,000,000,000**	**189,027**	**4,914,263,821**

Source: Ministry of Education. 1998. *Seminar on Assessment and improvement of the performance of Government Loan Fund.*

Asian Development Bank loan

Another name for this loan is the 'Economic Crisis Relief Loan Fund'. It is a sizeable programme that benefits hundreds of thousands of students adversely affected by the economic crisis over the past three years or so. The fund came from an Asian Development Bank loan that put aside one billion baht for the purpose of relieving poor students in primary and secondary schools of financial problems, while keeping them in school. The amount of loan was 4,000 baht each for primary school pupils and 5,000 baht for secondary school students. Two types of students were eligible – those who had to quit school due to diminishing family income or lay-off, and those who remained in school but were unable to pay school fees. In any event, the family annual income was not to exceed 120,000 baht. For the second type of students, holders of a scholarship were also eligible, provided the amount was for less than 4,000 or 5,000 baht, as the case might be.

By March 1999, 328,593 students in primary, secondary and religious schools were identified as being eligible for the loan for an aggregate of 1,356,805 billion baht. The operation of this loan was intended to be temporary and allocation was provided for fiscal year 1999 only. This meant that the request of some of these students would have to be denied. In the management of the loan, provincial authorities and schools had full responsibility in the identification and selection of needy students and in keeping track of the borrowers. At the time of writing, the first type of students had already been awarded the loan, while the second type of students were expecting the next allotment of the loan to occur around the middle of the year. Apart from the denial of the request of some students, only minor problems were faced concerning its distribution and monitoring.

Other financial assistance and scholarships

Types and sources of funds to assist poor students are diverse, involving both government budgets and voluntary private funds. To cover all sources would need an in-depth study in itself. Several private sources are department-bound, that is, they are donations to be monitored through a public department; while others are voluntary or spontaneous. An illustrative example is the Department of General Education, through which financial assistance and scholarships are administered for high-school students (Department of General Education, 1993).

Two types of funds are available. The first type is the scholarship categorized as subsidies in the annual budget allocation. The second type includes funds from private foundations and donations. Foundations put aside the interest and dividends of the funds as scholarships for students, whereas donations are lump sums given away by the donors for distribution in each school year. In the latter case, some are designated for the schools of the donor's preference, while others do not specify. Although the number is small (284 for school-designated and 173 for non-designated scholarships) and the value is minimal (1,000 to 1,800 baht), donations are a significant contribution to society.

Two particular examples of private scholarships can be given, namely:

- *King's Scholarships Programme*: this programme is administered by the Social Welfare Council of Thailand, under Royal patronage, and its branches, the latter being involved in identifying candidates and requesting funds. In 1998, a total of 965 scholarships were awarded to children and youth – 182 in Bangkok and 783 in the provinces. The amounts of the scholarships ranged from 1,500 baht for primary grades to 6,000 baht for university study, and the aggregate amount was 2,625,000 baht. The funds came from various sources, both domestic and foreign, such as the Thai-Hiroshima Friendship Association.

- *Educational Scholarships for Youth programme*: this programme is operated by Ruam Jit Nomklao Foundation for Youth under Her Majesty the Queen's patronage. Two types of students are provided scholarships, namely, formal school students and non-formal school learners. Over a 17-year period of its operation, between 1982-1998, the programme has awarded scholarships to 13,451 pupils and Buddhist novices/monks for an average amount of 83,708,050 baht.

(b) Programmes by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

In 1998 the Ministry completed the following services for the various types of disadvantaged children: orphans, abandoned children, wandering children, under-aged behaviours and abused children (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 1998):

Children in poor families and communities

Several forms of assistance are given to these children. Main ones include counselling, adopting families, supplementary food and toys, and services through child care centres. In 1998 counselling, necessary subsistence, and school costs were provided for 140,154 children. Adopting families were identified for a total of 588 children in the same year. In 1,047 children's centres throughout the country, a total of 43,253 children were provided supplementary food and toys. For disadvantaged communities such as slums, 78 centres were set up and supported to provide child-care services to a total of 2,810 children.

Wandering, begging, delinquent and abused children

For these children, services were in the forms of personal and family counselling, surveillance of misconduct, protection and sheltering. In 1998 a total of 9,594 children were assisted. They included 729 children in personal and family counselling, 243 children in surveillance of misconduct, 8,377 children under protection, and 245 children in sheltering.

Adopting families

Three types of arrangements were made for the adoption of children to help them develop a feeling of security and a sense of belonging. The first type was full adoption by families, whereas the second and third types were partial adoption, in which children were supervised but did not necessarily live with the families. A total of 2,966 cases were successfully offered adoption in 1998.

To obtain an overview of compensatory programmes for the disadvantaged young. *Table 15* below provides a brief recapitulative.

Table 15. Number of disadvantaged children and youth served through compensatory programmes

Compensatory programme (Public programmes)	Number of children served
School Lunch programme	2,521,270
Supplementary Food programme	4,845,330
Government Loan programme	408,894
Asian Development Bank loan	328,593
Other financial assistance	457
Welfare services	199,365
Total	**8,303,909**

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As indicated by *Table 15*, public programmes are exceptionally strong for school lunch and supplementary food, which benefit millions of children nationwide. Government and foreign bank loan programmes are also very strong in assisting needy children and youth.

2. Basic education programmes

Basic education programmes, in the form of mainstream education, represent the kind of assistance most widely offered to disadvantaged children by public organizations. Within the Ministry of Education, some 2,748,000 disadvantaged children are assisted each year through the various formal and non-formal programmes. Of these assisted children, about 15 per cent (nearly 450,000 children) are in formal schools, whereas the majority, 85 per cent (slightly over 2,300,000 children and youth) are in non-formal classes.

Several departments of the Ministry of Education offer basic education programmes to disadvantaged children. Some programmes are part of the formal functions of the department, while others are special projects under the auspices of organizations outside of the department or private groups.

1) Office of National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC)

This Office has a mandate for basic education of the disadvantaged who live in mountainous areas. The costs of the programmes are first allocated to ONPEC and then reallocated to concerned agencies. For the school year 1998-1999, the Office has a plan to provide services to some 91,407 children and youth. For 4,151 children aged three-to-five years pre-schooling will be provided. For 23,314 children aged six-to-fifteen years, various forms of help and activities are offered. Some pupils will be put in the dormitories constructed on primary-school premises, while others who can commute will be provided daily transportation. Bicycle loans will be made available for those who can commute, whereas food subsistence and farming projects will be provided to the needy. Basic schooling and vocational training will also be provided to 25,748 young people aged 16 to18, and 38,194 aged 19 and over.

Children of the minority groups pose some problems in mainstream education. Physical, sociocultural and economic factors are compounded problems in their schooling. Current statistics show a total of 326,986 children aged between 0 to18 years (ONPEC, 1999). Of this number, some 253,500 (about 78 per cent) receive educational services, while the remaining 73,512 (about 22 per cent) do not. If young people aged 19 and over are also taken into account, the total number is 644,828 and the number receiving education is 354,330 (about 55 per cent). As assistance to them covers a diversity of activities, delineation of the programmes will be dealt with in the fifth section of the chapter.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to regular programmes as above, the ONPEC also operates a programme for children with special needs (ONPEC, 1998*b*). In meeting the entitlement to 12 years of schooling of the partially handicapped children, classes are open in regular primary schools for them to learn together with normal children. In 1996, a total of 7,926 partially handicapped children were taught in the same class as normal children in 2,038 schools. In 1997 the number of children increased to 13,323 and the number of participating schools rose to 2,213. The ONPEC has to plan to increase the number of schools to 12,663 by the school year 2001, hence there will be at least one school in each school cluster that accommodates partially handicapped children. Hopefully, the number of children served would reach 76,000. That would also mean training additional teachers.

2) Department of General Education (DGE)

This Department is responsible for the schooling of disadvantaged children at both the elementary and secondary levels through several types of schools of its own and in collaboration with other public departments, private organizations and foundations. Two divisions of the DGE are charged with this responsibility, namely: the Division of Patronized Schools, and the Division of Special Schools.

The Division of Patronized Schools has 39 schools under its jurisdiction, with 27,874 pupils taught by 1,486 teachers. A total of 382 pupils are in kindergarten, 14,790 in elementary, and 12,752 in secondary. Children under the programme are those from very poor families, those who are educationally underserved, and those who are unfortunate cases such as slum children, children in areas affected by insurgency, children of islanders, jungle men and hill tribes, or orphans, homeless, etc. The programme emphasizes work education with a view towards self-employment after schooling. A great majority, that is some 23,150 children, are in school dormitories (Bureau of the Budget, 1998).

The Division of Special Schools has 41 schools under its jurisdiction, with 8,927 pupils and 723 teachers. These are children with eye, ear, mental or physical disabilities, including children with chronic illness under hospital care. Rehabilitation programmes for self-dependence and normal life in society are included.

In fiscal year 1998, the DGE also initiated a new programme on increasing opportunity for upper-secondary education with a view to assisting graduates of lower-secondary schools, who are children of poor families, to complete 12 years of basic education. The target group of this four-year programme began with 30,000 students in 1998 to reach an accumulated number of 480,000 high-school graduates in 2001. The total estimated expenditure is nearly 4,950 billion baht over five fiscal years 1998-2002 (Bureau of the Budget, 1998).

3) Department of Non-formal Education

This Department provides three programmes to cater to the needs of disadvantaged children. The first programme type covers basic education, which in 1997 accommodated some 2,307,430 children taught by 75,601 teachers. The second type of programme covers vocational education and training, which accommodated some 826,100 children, with 32,401 in-service teachers. Offered also is an informal education service through books, magazines, newspapers, bulletin boards and videotapes which, in 1997 served some 3,227,740 individuals. In 1997, the department provided library services to the general public and some 800 disadvantaged persons. The department also allocated government funds to support 37,511 village libraries. The department has 1,006 centres of non-formal education with a principal responsibility to carry out the activities of the first two programmes and to provide support to the third.

4) Office of the Private Education Commission

This Office provides two programmes for the needs of disadvantaged children. The programmes may be described as special and patronized education. The Special programme includes 11 schools with 248 teachers, accommodating 1,301 children with special needs. The Patronized School programme includes 22 schools which provide schooling for 9,630 children of poverty-stricken or educationally deprived families. The total number of teachers was 405 in 1997.

5) Department of Religious Affairs

In collaboration with Buddhist monks, this Department has set up pre-school centres in the temples nationwide since 1973, with an aim to help disadvantaged young children in the villages and communities. While most of the funds come from the temples, the government also provides some budget funds. In 1998, the total number of centres was 3,480, which accommodated 211,337 children with 9,592 teachers. The quality of services provided to 3 to 5 year elders was entirely acceptable. In addition, the Islamic mosques also organize pre-school centres of a similar nature. The total number was about 300 in 1998, accommodating 14,243 children, under the instruction of 677 teachers.

For the past 20 years, one of the salient features of the Buddhist temples' activities was education of the monks. They organized both the teaching of Buddhism and general secondary education classes for some 70,000 monks and novices each year. These are sons of disadvantaged families, who sought education otherwise inaccessible. In 1998 there were 369 schools for 72,798 monks and novices, about 70 per cent of whom were enrolled in lower-secondary classes.

Based on reported statistics of the various departments as above, *Table 16* summarizes the number of disadvantaged children and youth assisted by public organizations. While the figures are admittedly not uniformly based on the same fiscal years, they serve as an indicator of the efforts of the government in favour of the disadvantaged. As shown in the table, some 2,748,000 disadvantaged children are assisted each year through the various formal and non-formal programmes of the Ministry of Education. Of the children and youth assisted, about 15 per cent (nearly 450,000) are in formal schools, whereas the majority, 85 per cent (slightly over 2,300,000), are in non-formal classes. This underlines the principal role of non formal education in relieving the serious basic education problems of the young disadvantaged.

Table 16. Number of disadvantaged children and youth served through basic education programmes

	Pre-school	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Total
ONPEC	4,151	36,637	25,748	38,194	104,730
DGE	382	14,790	12,752	-	27,924
DNFE	-	-	-	-	2,307,430
OPEC	-	-	9,630	-	9,630
DRA	225,580	-	50,960	21,838	298,378
Total	**230,113**	**51,427**	**99,090**	**60,032**	**2,748,092**

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3. Vocational training programmes

Vocational training programmes are either in-school certificate programmes or tailor-made short courses for the disadvantaged. Two principal departments reside in the Ministry of Education, namely, the Department of Vocational Education and the Department of Non-formal Education. Another significant agency is the Department of Labour Skills Development in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

(a) Programmes under the Ministry of Education

1) Agricultural Study Programme

This is a programme initiated by the Ministry of Education for the Department of Vocational Education (DOVE) to implement. The overall objective of the programme is to provide educational opportunity for the last three years of a twelve-year basic education to children of farmers and rural dwellers who earn less than 50,000 baht a year. The project target groups are primarily graduates of Mathayom 3 (Grade 9) from 'opportunity schools' as well as secondary schools in general. The basic part of the programme is a three-year agriculture certificate, enriched with electives outside of the major department as desired by the students. Tuition fees are exempted for all course work, but students are advised to stay in the dormitories and carry out farm projects throughout the three-year period. Students are encouraged to pursue other skills outside of the department, such as automobile driving, tractor driving, nursing, and computer operation.

Of special interest are the facilities and utilities provided to the students. On the college premises, housing units (each for eight persons) are constructed. Each 'village' consists of 25 units able to accommodate 200 dwellers per village. Each village has a multi-purpose building constructed as a resource centre for self-access learning, adequately equipped with distance-learning technology, videotapes, and instructional technology. Space is set aside for a canteen, and another section for music practice. Public utilities are provided to the village to enhance boarding students' learning and way of life.

The students' farm projects are their way of making a living while in college. They live on farm produce that also constitutes a source of income. The government provides 5,000 baht per year for each student to meet the project costs; they are closely supervised by instructors. The water resource is very important and the college must find ways and means to develop it in order to support farm activities.

The students are responsible for cooking and preparing meals from the farm produce. House masters are assigned to provide general guidance and close supervision of their study, social activities, and daily living. Farm counsellors assist the students in the planning of farm production and study programmes and help them to seek professional training, as well as providing guidance on ways to earn income and meaningful daily living.

As an illustration of the volume of government assistance to children of the poor, the government has spent 2,268 million baht during the four-year period 1996 to 1999 inclusive, benefiting some 100,000 students.

2) Non-formal Vocational Training Programme

This is a programme operated by the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE). It aims at enhancing the knowledge and skills necessary for employment in private enterprises. It serves an employed workforce that has low educational attainment, typically below high school, and does not pursue further schooling. Its main target groups are women, senior citizens, in-service soldiers, the handicapped, and slum dwellers who need skills for rural occupations and self employment. The programme provides local short courses as well as distance lower-certificate study. In 1996, it served 548,193 followers of short courses, but only 991 certificate students. In 1997, the number of trainees in short courses increased to 826,101, taught by 32,401 in-service teachers. According to the plan, enrolments are to increase for both activities, as the Department has 1,006 centres of non-formal education to carry out the programmes.

There are other types of vocational training in the DNFE, but due to difficulty in age definitions, they are reported as other types of programmes under a separate section.

(b) Programmes under the Department of Labour Skills Development

The first Labour Skills Development Plan (1995-2001) contains four major activities of skills development, namely, occupational training, labour-skills standard testing, occupational training staff development, and promotion of private labour-skills development. The plan set forth a target of 1.9 million trainees over a seven-year period. The approach adopted is an open-door, area-based development policy, whereby local participation is encouraged. Hence, implementation of the scheme is achieved through bottom-up planning, mutual collaboration, and integration of facets of development. The human element as well as economic, social and cultural factors are equally emphasized to derive labour skills development that is well balanced and articulated with respect to the types of trades (Department of Labour Skills Development, 1996).

Three target groups are included in the plan efforts, namely, new labour, existing labour, and agricultural labour. New labour refers to drop-outs at the secondary level and below. These drop-outs, numbering about 500,000 each year, should at least receive training in fundamental skills through short courses. Existing labour refers to some 13.5 million workers already in employment, who need to be upgraded for greater efficiency as well as to accommodate technological advancement in private enterprises. Agricultural labour refers to the bulk of human resources estimated between 20-23 million a year. Formerly, these human resources were in the agricultural sector and contributed significantly to the national economy, but presently have become a less important factor contributing to gross national product.

At any rate, the agricultural workforce still retains a significant role as providers of food produce for consumption as well as suppliers of materials for food manufacturing and for food export. Major problems of this workforce are their low educational attainment (only primary education), lack of work skills, and seasonal variations that affect farming to the point where a large number of them choose to migrate to urban areas for employment.

Apart from these target groups, the Department also carried out a special programme for occupational training, skill standards testing, and trade skill contests. Over a three-year period, 1994 to 1996, the number of trainees increased drastically from 33,965 to 136,415 in regular programmes, and from 64,534 to 73,385 in tailor-made and other programmes. While these numbers were sizeable, not all fell within the school-age brackets. *Table 17* illustrates the Department's contribution in favour of disadvantaged children and youth between 1994 and 1996 (Department of Labour Skills Development, 1996).

Table 17. Number of trainees in Labour Skills Development programmes, fiscal years 1994-1996

Programmes and activities	1994	1995	1996
Regular Programme			
Pre-employment training	5,144	17,959	36,494
Skill upgrading training	9,304	31,148	31,317
On-the-job and specific training	11,215	22,971	35,428
Rural occupation training	8,302	22,724	33,176
Sub-total	33,965	94,802	136,415
Tailormade other programmes			
Special programmes	51,416	44,210	49,740
Other programmes	9,118	20,031	23,645
Sub-total	60,534	64,241	73,385
Total	**94,499**	**159,043**	**209,800**

Source: Department of Labour Skills Development, 1996.

Table 18 summarizes the number of disadvantaged children and youth benefiting from vocational education and training programmes. Public organizations have quite strong programmes and turn out hundreds of thousands of graduates each year. Unfortunately, figures in the private and semi-public organizations are not separable from integrated programmes (see *Section 5* of this Chapter) and hence are not helpful for comparison.

Table 18. Number of disadvantaged children and youth in Vocational Education and Training programmes, fiscal years 1996-1997

Vocational programme	Number of children served
Agricultural Study programme	100,000
Non-formal Vocational programme	548,193
Labour Skills Development programme	209,800
Total	**857,993**

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4. Basic/Vocational integrated programmes

Programmes of basic education combined with vocational training are not on a regular basis as one would expect. The principal agency is the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which accommodates some 10,704 children yearly. Most programmes are geared towards children in especially difficult circumstances such as maltreated children, child workers, and child prostitutes. While the number of cases in Section 5 also applies to this section, it does not necessarily mean that all cases were included in the integrated programmes. Consequently, a lack of quantitative information negates tabulation to indicate the magnitude of assistance efforts in the private sector.

A few public organizations carry out standard integrated programmes of basic schooling and vocational training as a primary part of their responsibility. These are non-formal education in nature, as described below.

1) Programmes by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare organized integrated basic education and vocational training in 34 centres and children's homes. This was the service that accompanied basic life necessities such as shelter and food. A total of 10,704 children were provided such services in these welfare centres. It is worthy of note that moral education and job placement were also part of the services to enhance citizenship and self-dependence necessary for becoming responsible members of the larger society. A good example is the Youth Training programme which is summarized below.

2) MLSW's Youth Training Programme

The programme is offered by the Department of Skill Development to cater to the needs of prospective employers for young people who have just completed compulsory education (grade 9) and do not enjoy a continuing educational opportunity. It aims at the 13- to 15-years-old target groups for the training of skills suitable for their age. The benefit of the programme is physical, mental, habitual, and skill-readiness preparation for work in the industrial and service sectors.

The training course is nine to ten months long, depending on the kind of skill for training. Upon completion of this part of training, the trainees would be admitted to a private firm for an additional two to three months of on-the-job training. During the formal training session, trainees also take time off to attend literacy classes, using the syllabus of the Department of Non-formal Education. Hence, the entire programme takes about one and a half years to complete. The types of skills, training duration and on-the-job training requirements are illustrated in *Table 19*. It is unfortunate that figures are not available for comparison.

Table 19. Type of skill, training duration and on-the-job training for Youth Training programme

Type of skills	Training (months)	Duration (hours)	On-the-job (months)
Pottery	10	1,600	4
Ceramics	10	1,600	4
Commercial drawing	10	1,600	4
Dressmaking	10	1,600	4-12
Weaving	10	1,600	2
Gem cutting	9	1,440	6
Motorcycle repair	9	1,440	3
Petroleum station Attendance	1	160	1

Source: Department of Skill Development, 1998. *Annual Report.*

5. Programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances

Programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances need special attention because they are tailored to the specific needs of these children. While these children need curative and rehabilitative attention first for recovery, as outlined in a previous section, they do need education and training at a later stage for long-term self-dependence. The educational programmes are described below according to the category of children that they target, namely maltreated children, child labour, child prostitutes, very poor children, abandoned children, children of construction workers, children in slums and children of different cultures and minority groups (typology made by the Office of the National Education Commission, 1998).

1) Programmes targeting maltreated children

The term 'maltreated children' refers to those who have been treated with brutality or whose health and safety have been threatened. Such brutality adversely affects their physical, mental, emotional and intellectual wellbeing. The case of child molestation and rape is also regarded as child maltreatment.

While the exact number of maltreated children is unknown, there is often news of children being subjected to brutality, physically as well as mentally. This may be in the form of beating, hurting, deceiving and molesting, particularly by parents, guardians, employers, or kinship. Due to threat and closeness in kinship, the maltreated are reluctant to complain or file a law suit. In 1996, the Department of Social Welfare assisted 71 cases of the physically and mentally maltreated, and 93 cases of rape and molestation. Another report of the Office of the Youth Promotion and Co-ordination Commission in the same year showed assistance of private organizations to 74 cases of the physically and mentally maltreated and 169 cases of rape and molestation. The Children Protection Foundation also reported 138 legal cases of sexual maltreatment in 1997. Assuming that these figures are additive, one calculates that the total number of reported cases was 545.

Essentially the assistance provided to these children was curative and legal rather than preventive and educational as necessitated by the nature of reported cases. Examples of assisting organizations are: the Department of Public Welfare, the Child's Rights Protection Centre, Emergency Home, and Women's Home.

But there is no direct mention in the literature as to how these children were educated. It was suspected that once they recovered from the shock of the circumstances, they were treated as other types of ill-fated children. Here one stresses the necessity to provide schooling to this type of children as a complete package. It could take the form of in-house activities, if and when the facilities accommodating them could support this.

2) Programmes targeting child labour

Employed young children typically attain a low level of education and possess no occupational skills. They overwork and find no time for leisure, let alone schooling. Their employers always take advantage of them and are reluctant to support or allow them to take classes to improve their literacy level and occupational skills. In the absence of a law requiring these children to engage in some kind of schooling, they are deprived of an opportunity to learn and to acquire technical skills for their own benefit. Many children express an interest in pursuing technical training in a private institution or a public polytechnic school, but the costs are prohibitive. Since current literature hardly mentions educational programmes for these children, it might well be concluded that special attention should be given to them. A good opportunity might be to include a phrase in a vocational education Act which, according to rumours, is on the drawing board.

3) Programmes targeting child prostitutes

Thai law prohibits child and adult prostitution and hence it is difficult to compile the number of prostitutes. The number of child prostitutes differs from one source to another. For example, the Police Department (recently renamed the Office of the National Police Commission) reported that 160,000 children under 16 years of age were prostitutes in 1996. For the same year, the Department of Communicable Diseases, Ministry of Public Health, documented 66,190 cases of child prostitution under 18 years, while the Children's Rights Protection Foundation estimated 800,000 cases. *Table 20* presents the number of child prostitutes estimated by various sources (tabulated from the Office of the National Education Commission, 1998, pp. 11-12).

Table 20. Number of child prostitutes in 1996 estimated by various sources

Source of information	Number of child prostitutes
Police Department	160,000
Department of Communicable Diseases, Min. of Public Health	66,190
Children's Rights Protection Foundation	800,000
Enchild Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ESCAP)	250,000
National Women's Promotion and Co-ordination Commission	30,000 - 40,000
National Youth Promotion and Co-ordination Commission	30,000 - 60,000
Department of Labour Welfare and Protection	23,000 - 26,000
Population and Social Research Institute, Mahidol University	67,000
	100,000

Source: The Progress of Nations, UNICEF Report.

The causes of child prostitution reside in extreme family poverty, existence of child prostitution networks across the borders, and attitude towards easy money for clothes and consumer goods. Conducive to proliferation of child prostitution is the fact that the business always has customers and there are chains of obscenity and hardcore all over the place.

Assistance to child prostitutes comes from numerous organizations. The first type of assistance is protection and rehabilitation. This is further augmented with occupational training and sexual morality. Many of these projects are collaborative efforts of several organizations. For example, welfare and occupational training represents the efforts of the Department of Social Welfare, the Women Foundation, the Women's Status Promotion Association, Women's Friend Group, North Star Associates, Thai Catholic Congress for Development, and Happy Home Forever.

A project on 'Promotion of sex morality' has exceptionally wide participation by some 14 agencies, such as the Public Relations Department, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Office of National Cultural Affairs, and the Office of National Identity Promotion, etc. A study on 'Models for new hope' and a national seminar on 'Roles of public and private agencies in the prevention and rectification of sex business' represent an extensive public campaign against child prostitution, both of boys and girls. Rescue activities such as those by the Police Department and many concerned government agencies are viable initiatives in relieving girls and boys from sexual harassment through abduction, brutal force and monetary incentives.

While brute-force rescues and curative/rehabilitative measures are in demand, preventive/promotive/educative measures must not be neglected for long-lasting effects. Many underaged prostitutes do revert to the business out of habit, or as they cannot make a living otherwise. Fortunately, most underaged girl prostitutes are put in a special home that offers basic education and skill training on a regular basis. For a growing country like Thailand, appropriate technological skills are necessary to make a better living. This would mean a higher level of literacy required for the study of such skills. It is therefore imperative that education for these children should be at least at a secondary level, in order to acquire literacy skills adequate for further vocational training. In this manner, they would be better equipped for the modern society, where competition is excessively high. A failure to do so would mean a likelihood of their getting back to the vicious cycle of prostitution.

4) Programmes targeting very poor children

While the Department of Social Welfare estimated as many as 6,029,000 poverty-stricken families in 1997, there are no uniform criteria for the identification of the poor. Poverty in Thailand exists in the context of a rural economy. It is widely contended that about one-quarter of the population, or about 30 per cent of rural dwellers, fall below the poverty line. The most densely populated region of the country is the north-east, in which about 80 per cent of the poor are in the agricultural sector, almost 98 per cent of whom have educational attainment lower than secondary school.

Assistance to very poor children is offered by several public and private organizations. Apart from education loans from several sources, school-lunch programmes and dormitories or shelters are also part of the assistance to them. Despite all this, a good number of poor children still cannot obtain access to public services due to limitations in their availability and distribution.

Poverty-stricken families are proportionally highest in the north-east than the rest of the country. Unfortunately, this is the most densely populated farming area, where 98 per cent of the populace never attended high school.

Several public departments and private agencies provide integrated educational programmes to these children. Apart from secondary and post-secondary education loans for very poor students, the Department of Public Welfare also offers occupational training and moral education to residents of the centres. It is worthy of note that very poor children are normally identified by local authorities for basic education and training through regular channels, considered suitable for children of normal intelligence. Poverty alone seems to be a less tricky problem to cope with. For policy-makers, especially in the context of 12 years of universal education for all, extreme cases of poverty should be identified by local authorities and suitable integrated programmes be offered, together with compensatory and related services.

5) Programmes targeting abandoned children and orphans

The abandonment of children and orphans is a rising trend. The Department of Public Welfare reported that in 1994 assistance was given to 74,802 children, hence a big jump from 1,526 cases in 1992.

The causes of child abandonment and orphaning are many. A long list would include broken home, divorce, separation, poverty, large-sized family, incurable diseases, drug addiction, disability, imprisonment of the parent, premature or student pregnancy, war, and natural disasters.

Abandoned children and orphans offer a major clientele for substitution programmes whereby temporary and permanent care is provided. Basically, this is in the form of services that promote physical, mental, emotional and social growth of the child. Examples are welfare centres operated by the Department of Public Welfare and other private organizations. Adopting parents compensate for the child's biological parents, and the children's village, such as that provided by the Sosa Foundation of Thailand, provides a permanent shelter, thus avoiding the need to return to the original family or to rely on adoptive parents.

While substitution programmes of temporary and permanent care are required for promoting these children's physical, mental, emotional and social growth, education and training are also very important for a better life. Regrettably, literature hardly hints at such activities.

6) Programmes targeting wandering children

Society nowadays is conducive to a rise in the number of wandering children in large urban areas. Children in these areas have high risks of social harassment including crime, drug addiction, and child prostitution. The Department of Social Welfare estimated 14,254 wandering children in 1996, whereas statistics of the Office of National Youth Promotion and Co-ordination showed 556 wandering children as recipients of social services from private agencies. This illustrates the inadequacy of the services in quantitative terms alone.

Most wandering children are deprived of the opportunity for schooling as they move around from place to place with their parents. They may get some schooling, but the lack of their parents' support, or their parents' low educational attainment, coupled with their low intelligence and motivation, results in a low level of education. The large majority do not complete primary school.

The causes of wandering children are several. The first has to do with the family itself. Circumstances such as a broken home, lack of warmth, beating, severe punishment, and hard chores are motives for their get away. In some cases they just get lost when their parents move out to another workplace. Other cases are intentional abandonment to relieve the burden of feeding them. The second cause has to do with the children themselves. They get away from home through their own will. Some suffer from a lack of freedom, while others just sneak into the outer world out of curiosity. There are also cases where they fail in class and choose to go out with friends for enjoyment. Many are lured into misconduct and crime, unaware of consequences. Third is the society itself that offers temptations to the children. The mass media also reflect the values of the society and reveal the world of luxury that prompts children to seek after. More often than not, they fall into the trap of misconduct.

Assistance to wandering children is to satisfy their basic needs, that is, shelter, food, clothing, medicine, education and recreation. Public organizations such as Bangkok Metropolis, local municipalities, and the Department of Social Welfare provide such basic needs as standard services. Support of schooling through volunteer teachers is practised widely and has become quite effective. Many children drop back to municipal schools where welfare programmes are regularly offered.

The private sector seems to do a good job in helping wandering children in difficult instances. Street children are assisted directly by teachers by means of personal contact and open home for needy children. Quite a few groups are active in such programmes as Creative Home for Children, Love Sharing Home, House of Care, and Sunshine Children's Home. Co-operative efforts through networks and co-ordination with public organizations are the salient features of the programmes operated by private agencies.

The inadequacy of the services in quantitative terms has to be pointed out, since only a small fraction of wandering children get access to the services. It is believed that most wandering children are deprived of opportunities for schooling as they migrate with their parents. The lack of parental support, or low parental educational attainment, together with low motivation, results in the large majority not completing even primary school.

As mentioned earlier, wandering children are in need of education and recreation apart from other basic life essentials. The need for education is better served through 'street teachers' who actually teach them in the streets while making friends with them. Some local agencies do teach literacy and convince them to drop back in school. But most local agencies are more succinct in dealing with this problem. Reckoning that these children are low achievers, they do not teach basic education *per se*, but rather approach them with short courses such as bamboo weaving, farming, flower arrangement, sewing and the like. While these courses may not be integrated in a true sense, at least attempts have been made to offer the kind of schooling that is more meaningful to them.

The private sector seems to do a better job in offering combined programmes to wandering children who have low motivation. Below are some approaches used by private agencies in reaching out to these children.

Street teacher approach

Here field officers, or volunteers, as street teachers go out to have personal contact with stray children in the streets or in the crowds. After a few days of knowing and understanding each other by talking and getting acquainted, activities are organized. Typically, the activities involve recreation, games and literacy classes. They make trips and go camping on occasions.

Open house approach

Open houses are places where children are sheltered and looked after. Schooling is tailored to their needs, which consists mainly of basic subjects for further study in educational institutions, and literacy or remedial classes. Morning hours are devoted to classes whereas the afternoon hours are set aside for recreation and short-term occupational training. Some children are quite well prepared for formal schooling and they are sent to schools nearby. Although admission does not require birth certificates or house registrations, graduation diplomas do require them. As a result, children only receive statements of completion, which are inadequate for job application or for further study. There is a real need to change this policy. Perhaps cumulative records and certificates of individual course completion should suffice for such purposes.

Community-based approach

In this approach, children are accommodated in the communities and stay with the project staff. Learning takes place at home and sponsors take the children out to meet with community members to bring them up socially. Their learning activities incorporate both basic knowledge and skills practice. The only limitation in this approach is its labour intensiveness, for the project field-staff can manage only a few at a time.

7) Programmes targeting children of construction workers

The rapid economic growth that triggered the house and building construction boom in the early 1990s created a huge demand for workers. This prompted rural dwellers to flock into the Bangkok suburbs and other urban areas for cash earnings which were much higher than earnings from farming. These workers brought with them spouses and children and settled wherever they could find shelter. The number of children they brought along could not be tracked down as house registration was not in order. Through enrolment in non-formal education classes, there were 23,684 children of this sort in 1994. The Office of National Youth Promotion and Co-ordination reported 92 recipients of social services from these families in 1996. This pointed out incompatibility of supply and demand, so to speak.

Difficulties faced by children of construction workers included haphazard building, diseases, malnutrition, and lack of continuous schooling due to frequent migration. While the absence of proper house registration and birth certificates leads to a problem in school registration, migration poses a more serious problem when one considers that it impedes development of a sense of security and belonging to a place called 'home'.

It is not difficult to rationalize that children of construction workers need special help to enhance their intellectual, mental, emotional and physical development. Fortunately, there have been collaborative efforts by various public organizations to set up daycare centres and mobile child-care services in the construction sites. Participating organizations are: the Department of Public Welfare, the Ministry of Labour, The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University Affairs, and some private groups.

Children brought along by parents when they move to the construction sites, or places nearby, are difficult to track down unless personal contacts are made with the parents. Non-formal education or second-chance classes are popular, proving suitable as the parents move around frequently from one site to another.

Apart from public and private daycare centres which are not actually school houses for pre-school children, the Creative Children's Foundation provides educational support to some 500 school-aged children each year. The nature of schooling for these children is non-formal, combining basic knowledge with skills training in areas where the Non-formal Education Department has both staff and expertise.

8) Programmes targeting slum children

Statistics of Bangkok Metropolis showed that in 1994 there existed 1,224 slums with some 1.26 million dwellers. In 1992, a total of 75,163 children were of school age, but only 64 per cent were enrolled in formal schooling. This would mean that some 26,000 children did not attend school.

Aside from the educational and economic status of slum-dwelling children, all else seems to be against them. Poor environment, inadequate public utilities, poor health, quality of life, safety, etc. impede their normal development and daily living. Any assistance at all is relevant and responsive to their needs. Perhaps it is because this is the most identifiable clientele that help comes forward from everywhere. It means improved dwelling places, better environment, better food, better health care, and improved safety and security for their life. Teacher volunteers and mobile schools are regular educational services provided to them.

As mentioned implicitly earlier, a very high proportion (36 per cent in 1994) of the children in Bangkok slums do not attend school. These slums are quite accessible, although the streets are narrow, and hence teacher volunteers and mobile schools can be provided on a regular basis. Educational services are offered in the form of vocational training and job placement. Some vocational facilities are set up on site, while others are mobile workshops that move around from place to place for skill training in the various trades. For basic education, mobile welfare schools are set up and unemployed university graduates or volunteers are engaged as teachers.

9) Programmes targeting children of different culture and minority groups

Several minority groups live in Thailand, such as *karin, museur, egaw,* etc. There are also groups of different cultures, such as the *oceania* in the south.

A report of the Department of Public Welfare in 1993 showed 35,288 minority children aged 3 to 6 years, 75,830 aged 6 to 15 and 67,066 aged 15 to 25. While the age brackets did not concur with general understanding, there was a total of 178,184 children and youth of minority groups aged between 3 to 25 years to care for.

As expected, problems of these children relate to their health and nutrition. It is no surprise that many of them die of diseases, malnutrition and iodine deficiency. Rapid economic and social changes of the country have adverse effects on their attitude and way of life. Unsuitable clothing, inappropriate consumption, child abandonment, prostitution, drug addiction, HIV infection, begging, gambling, etc. are but a few examples of social problems of children of the minority groups.

Assistance to this group is carried out jointly by the Department of Public Welfare, Hill tribe Development and Welfare Centre and many other agencies with support from UNICEF. Basically, the services are in the areas of public health, education, social and cultural development, and fundamental services for survival, children's growth, leadership, and participatory decision-making for community development.

Table 21 below presents the figures corresponding to the number of disadvantaged children and youth served by programmes focused on children under especially difficult circumstances.

Table 21. Number of disadvantaged children and youth served by programmes focused on children under especially difficult circumstances

Programmes	Number of children served
Maltreated children	545
Child labour	812
Prostitutes	n/a
Child labour	n/a
Abandoned children	74,802
Wandering children	556
Children of construction workers	24,184
Slum children and children of minorities	n/a
Total	**100,991**

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6. Other types of programmes

Principal departments in the Ministry of Education (DOVE, DNFE, ONPEC, etc.) provide a diversity of educational and vocational training services to disadvantaged children, youth and adults. Numerous private organizations also offer programmes of similar nature but they cannot be distinguished as above. Both sectors offer a wide range of assistance to disadvantaged children – from basic literacy to occupational training to protection and rehabilitation. As information lacks uniformity, the most appropriate way to study this is to describe them on a case by case basis.

Overall, some 120 organizations and groups, including a few international agencies, offer assistance to disadvantaged children in the forms of schooling, occupational training and general help. This may be broken down into some 120 programmes for general help, 58 for education, and 37 for occupational training. Below is a summary of distinctive programmes in significant scopes of coverage and life span.

(a) Programmes by the Department of Vocational Education

The project of Agricultural Education for Rural Development was initiated by the Department of Vocational Education (DOVE) in the early 1990s to assist children of the rural poor in improving the family farm while, at the same time, keeping the young in schooling. In 1999 the DOVE was allocated a budget fund of 19.5 million baht for the training of 4,230 farm children. A deviation of the entry point from mid-May to the first of October is permissible to allow for flexibility and accommodation of students who drop out of school. The programme lends support to the national policy on socio-economic rehabilitation on the ground that agriculture is the back-bone of the country.

(b) Programmes by the Department of Vocational Education (DVE)

1) Vocational programmes for schools under the auspices of the Border Patrol Police Force (BPPF)

In 1997, the Department of Vocational Education initiated a vocational training programme for students in remote schools operated by the BPPF with a view to providing vocational training short courses to some 15,000 children in the first year, up to some 26,250 students in 2001, the last year of the project (Bureau of the Budget, 1998). This would be a great contribution to basic education of children scattered over the borders of Thailand, where regular schools are inaccessible or not cost-effective on the ground of physical and psychological insecurity of dwellers. The skills taught would be those relevant to and suitable for local needs, such as farming, handicrafts, construction, repair work, etc.

2) Vocational programmes in polytechnics and occupational training colleges

The polytechnics and occupational training colleges under the Department of Vocational Education offered certificate programmes and short courses for secondary-school students in local areas. In 1996, some 8,200 students were enrolled in the programmes operated by polytechnics and some 18,000 in vocational colleges. These vocational institutions have very high potentials to serve the purposes of work education as a complementary part of twelve-year basic education for all. It is expected that the roles of these institutions will be expanded to cover secondary students within the boundary of the anticipated local education areas to be effectuated by the new education Bill.

(c) Programmes by the Department of Non-formal Education

1) Distance learning via satellite programme

The Department of Non-formal Education operates a distance-learning programme for target groups in urban and remote areas for equal opportunity of quality education. Satellite dishes are supplied to provincial offices for distribution and receivers are installed at strategic locations for the learning audience. Manuals and pamphlets are also reproduced and distributed for nationwide use. Both budget funds and donations form the basis of operational costs. The programme commenced in 1995, and by mid-1997 the total number of hardware satellite dishes reached 13,610 units of satellite dishes and 14,855 receiver sets (Bureau of the Budget, 1998). The numbers reached in 1996 were 13,408 at the primary level and 104,161 at the lower- and upper-secondary levels combined.

2) Programme for inhabitants of high plateaux

The Department of Non-formal Education operates an educational programme for inhabitants of mountainous sparse areas in the north. Substantive learning is in line with their environs and way of life, including knowledge and services in primary health care with a view to upgrading the quality of their life. In 1997, some 20,730 youth and adults benefited from this programme. The department is allocated 65 to 70 million baht a year for this coverage.

3) Informal education programmes

The Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) provides three programmes to cater to the needs of disadvantaged children. As stated earlier, the first programme type is basic education and the second is vocational education and training. The third programme type is an informal education service through books, magazines, newspapers, bulletin boards and videotapes which, in 1997, served some 3,227,740 individuals. In 1997 the Department provided library services to the general public and some 800 disadvantaged persons. It also allocated government funds to support 37,511 village libraries (Bureau of the Budget, 1998). The Department has 1,006 centres of non-formal education which, apart from the principal responsibility of conducting the activities of the first two programmes, provide support to the informal education service.

4) Interest groups programme

The Department of Non-formal Education operates an Interest groups programme for women at risk, senior citizens and the handicapped, with a view to encouraging them to seek self-development and occupational learning activities, including practices in thinking processes applicable to daily life. While this is not specifically for young children and youth, some 90,000 people benefited from this programme in 1997 (Bureau of the Budget, 1998).

5) Functional literacy programmes

The Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) also conducts a Functional literacy programme for the illiterate and post-school learners to enable them to read and write and gain basic knowledge adequate for daily work and communicating. Local volunteer teachers are employed to deliver the services. Some 10,500 learners were served in 1996, but the number for the first half of 1997 (4,700) suggested a falling trend. According to the DNFE's plan, an annual figure of 4,000 learners will be maintained throughout (Bureau of the Budget, 1998).

6) Educational opportunity programme

The Department of Non-formal Education operates an Educational opportunity programme for disadvantaged children and youth as well as for compulsory-education graduates (MS 3) who do not continue schooling, with a view to providing ground for twelve-year basic education for all. This is a twelve-year-long programme (1990-2001) for all provinces to ensure nationwide coverage. The programme aims at serving some 3,514,700 children in lower-secondary education, some 170,000 in upper-secondary education, and some 149,600 in vocational education (Bureau of the Budget, 1998).

7) Bangkok Children and Youth Welfare

The programme is operated by the Bangkok Metropolis Administration aimed at assisting pre-school children, children and youth in formal and non-formal school, and other disadvantaged young (Bangkok Metropolis Administration, 1998). It has set up welfare centres for pre-school children, provides stationery and uniforms to school pupils, and awards scholarships to in-school students up to degree level. For children and youth under especially difficult circumstances, the programme provides security and rehabilitation. While its activities are comprehensive, the number of beneficiaries is in the hundreds, apparently not very large.

8) Child's Participation and Development (Education) programme

Two projects in particular attend to the children's mental well-being and their social skills to ensure the holistic development, particularly, of children in rural areas (UNICEF-Thailand, 1999). First, the Integrated Family-Based Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) has as its goal to improve the care for, and the development of, disadvantaged children aged 0 to 6 years from within their homes and communities, both through maximization and effective utilization of existing child care centres via training of child care centre minders, and through training of parents in rearing their own children. The project also develops an effective co-ordination mechanism between the disparate ministries and departments involved, as well as a rotating lead role as co-ordinator among the participants.

Hence, the effective use of existing child care centres in 190 rural communities is realized. Second, the Child Friendly School Initiative (CFS) further includes primary-age children beyond 6 years. Again, the concern is on total development of the child and it has drawn heavily on education for life and the need to develop life skills to enable them to survive throughout their working lives. In the evolving CFS approach, schools are seen as an integral part of the community and children are encouraged to learn in a fun way and to love their own communities. Meanwhile, parents and teachers are introduced to a 'child rights' approach to education through training and an early-warning system to recognize children's problems. The warning system is achieved through the MIS component that tracks children's intellectual and physical development.

9) Other minor programmes

There is a whole host of assistance programmes and activities for the young disadvantaged. Here are two sample programmes run by voluntary private groups:

- *The Human Resource Development Programme,* under the auspices of the Sopha Thannamjai Foundation for Thai Society Development, provides scholarships and lunch funds to 85 disadvantaged children (Social Welfare Council of Thailand, 1998).
- *The Ban Huay Moh Orphanage,* operated by an ethnic Christian priest named Father Atthapol, and sponsored by a construction businessman called Grier, assists children of seven hill tribes in north Thailand by providing proper living quarters and preparing them for the nearest schools (Bangkok Post, 1 June 1999).

Tabulation of the programmes (*Table 22*) shows that the numbers of beneficiaries are small but significant. The informal and educational opportunity programmes are the two programmes that can reach very large numbers of disadvantaged children and youth. To a lesser degree, another two programmes, distance learning and interest group classes, have a potential for further expansion for large coverage over the years.

Table 22. Number of beneficiaries by programme, yearly and aggregated

Regular public programme	Number		Note
	Yearly	Aggregated	
Agricultural Education for Rural Development	4,230	-	Plan for 1999
Border Patrol Schools	26,250	-	1996 Statistics
Polytechnics and Occupational Colleges	26,200	-	1997 Statistics
Distance Learning	117,569	-	1996 Statistics
High Plateau Inhabitants	20,730	-	Plan for 2001
Informal Education	-	3,227,740	1997 Statistics
Interest Groups	90,000	-	1997 Statistics
Functional Literacy	10,500	-	Plan 1990-2001
Educational Opportunity	-	3,834,300	1996 Statistics
Total	**295,479**	**7,062,040**	

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CHAPTER 3: DIFFERENT ROLES FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

This chapter discusses current trends and challenges for different roles of public authorities, taking into account best practices and lessons learned, challenges for sustainability and participation of the private sector, and different issues raised by the provision of alternative education to the disadvantaged. It is admitted that the complexity of the problems at this juncture, coupled with scattered information and incoherence of efforts, makes it difficult to propose measures unless a systemic reform is undertaken in the wake of the new educational Bill.

1. Key policies in favour of the young disadvantaged

A number of key policies instigate public efforts to provide education and training to the young disadvantaged. Among them are: development of the disadvantaged, mandatory 12 years of basic education for all, anticipated legislation on vocational education and training at the secondary-school level, and decentralization of the public services systems, especially education (NESDC, 1996). While these policies provide a driving force in favour of the young disadvantaged, present economic circumstances do not permit unlimited access to scarce resources, which now have diminished. Under the present situation, cost-effectiveness alone would not adequately justify a programme for the poor, as it would put an excessive strain on government resources. Inevitably, cost-efficiency would become an additional factor in consideration of a programme targeting the young disadvantaged.

(a) Protecting the disadvantaged

One of the objectives of the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan is to enhance opportunities for protection of, assistance to, and basic social services for all disadvantaged groups with a view to enabling them to live a peaceful and decent life in society (NESDC, 1996). The first target groups are children in difficult circumstances, which include HIV-infected children, wandering children and children of economically low-status families who do not have the opportunity for continuous schooling. Other groups include maltreated youth and women prostitutes, the handicapped, the rural and urban poor, prison convicts, and citizens of different cultures or races.

Eleven guidelines are delineated for the development of disadvantaged children, three of which (listed below) are related to education and training (NESDC, 1996):

- Encouraging employers to provide or improve suitable welfare services to child labour, especially in education, vocational skills development, recreation and quality of life development;
- Developing assistance procedures and promoting educational and skills training opportunities for poor rural children as well as children in difficult circumstances, in accordance with their specific needs and potentials, as may be permitted by local resources; and
- Promoting a systematic occupational development scheme for the rural youth through occupational information services and the development of analytical abilities for choosing a suitable occupation.

(b) Mandatory 12 years of basic education for all

A draft education Bill passed the first reading by parliament in March 1999, pending further scrutiny by the senate before final resolution for adoption. It was expected that by mid-1999 the Bill would be passed by parliament and become effective for implementation.

According to Article 10 of the draft Bill, all Thai citizens are entitled to a minimum of 12 years of free basic education (NEC, 1999). Handicapped and disadvantaged individuals shall receive special attention with equal opportunity. A policy on equal opportunity, in this latter case, is the guiding principle of education for the disadvantaged that implies cost-effectiveness in favour of equity for the group, regardless of geographical location and ethnic background. This force would work as a 'push' in a push-pull paradigm. In addition, Article 13 of the draft Bill also stipulates the rights of parents to benefit from government subsidies for the basic education of their children, which further supports the principle of education for the disadvantaged in equity terms.

(c) Legislation on vocational education and training

The original version of the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan for the period 1997-2001 expresses a vision for all disadvantaged persons to have access to educational services and obtain employment (NESDC, 1996). As human development is central to the plan, a holistic approach to its implementation is advocated. The disadvantaged of all types would be provided with opportunities for full development of their potentials, which include labour skills for increased productivity and better socio-economic adjustment. When a new version of the Eighth Plan was adopted a couple of years later, occupational skills had become even more significant for the rehabilitation of the economy, both in terms of the training of an initial skill and retraining in a second skill required for a change in the labour market demand. For the disadvantaged who lack both the capital and entrepreneurial skills, the need for versatile or adaptive skill training becomes more apparent.

Article 20 of the draft education Bill that passed the first reading of the House of representatives, charges vocational education and training to public and private educational institutions and private enterprises. It also stipulates the requirement for a vocational education and training law. This would, in essence, mean that vocational education and training is to be a complementary part of basic education. Many aspects of vocational education and training would apply to the disadvantaged. The difference may be in terms of the age and the skill level to suit the needs of the young disadvantaged.

The drafting of a vocational and training Act is now under way. It is anticipated that children under 17 years of age would be provided either vocational skills at a secondary school, or practical training at a private enterprise. For the disadvantaged, the courses would be free of charge, or the training costs be covered by government subsidies channelled through the training providers. In this respect, vocational training of the young disadvantaged would become part and parcel of mainstream education, under joint responsibilities of the institution and the enterprise, with an age limit set at 17 years for practical basic vocational skills. Beyond this would be a concerted effort of the society as a whole, which is a real challenge when the level of educational attainment of the people is to be raised, the economy more advanced, and the competition more intense.

(d) Decentralization of decision-making in education

Pursuant to Section 4 in Chapter Four of the Eighth Plan (NESDC, 1996), decentralization of education is one of the main themes in the education Bill. This is to restructure the school governance as well as the socio-technology aspects of basic education that are the right of all individuals. The draft Bill, which subscribes to the Plan measures, instigates participation by parents, communities and local bodies in decision-making for the schooling of their own children. The jurisdiction body for 12-year basic education would be area-based, called the Local Education Authority, which may well be a sub-division of the provincial office. The new body would be charged with the duties and responsibilities of overseeing academic affairs, financial matters, personnel administration, and business administration of the schools under its jurisdiction.

The only type of schools outside of its jurisdiction would be those which are located in the boundary of the municipalities at the provincial or district level. While site-based management for the individual schools is not explicit in the education Bill, Article 9 clearly stipulates some form of decentralization at the local school level. The implication of this clause would be that the school administrative council or the like would have direct responsibility for the schooling of the young disadvantaged in its service area. This is apparently a new force in the education and training of the young disadvantaged.

2. An overview of present programmes' performance

An overview of current programmes in favour of disadvantaged children is presented in *Table 23*. From this table, strengths and weaknesses may be observed as a basis for further discussion and suggestions.

Acronyms:

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DGE	Department of General Education
DLSD	Department of Labour Skills Development
DNFE	Department of Non-formal Education
DRA	Department of Religious Affairs
DOVE	Department of Vocational Education
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MOE	Ministry of Education
ONPEC	Office of the National Primary Education Commission
OPEC	Office of the Private Education Commission

Table 23. Matrix of education and training programmes for the young disadvantaged

Public organizations			Private or semi-public agencies		Total
Programmes	Organizations responsible	Number of children	Programmes	Number of children	
Compensatory					
School lunch	ONPEC	2,521,270	Maltreated	545	
Supplementary food	ONPEC	4,845,330	Child labour	812	
Government loans	MOE	408,894	Prostitutes	n/a	
	ADB	328,593	Very poor	n/a	
Other financial assistance		457			
Welfare services	MLSW	199,365	Abandoned	74,802	
			Wandering	556	
			Workers	92	
			Slum	n/a	
			Minorities	n/a	
Total		**8,303,909**		**76,807**	**8,380,716**
Basic education					
Pre-school	ONPEC	4,151	Workers	23,684	
	DGE	382			
	DRA	225,580			
Primary	ONPEC	36,637			
	DGE	14,790			
Secondary	ONPEC	63,942			
	DGE	12,752			
	OPEC	9,630			
	DRA	72,798			
	DNFE	2,307,430			
Total		**2,748,092**		**23,684**	**2,771,776**

Public organizations			Private or semi-public agencies		Total
Programmes	Organizations responsible	Number of children	Programmes	Number of children	
Vocational education and training					
Agric. Study Prog.	DOVE	100,000			
Non-formal Voc. Programme	DNFE	548,193			
Labour Skills Devt. Programme	DLSD	209,800			
Total		**857,993**			**857,993**
Integrated					
	MLSW	10,704	Workers	500	
	ONPEC	63,942			
Total		**74,646**		**500**	**11,204**
Other					
Agriculture	DOVE	4,230			
Border patrol	DVE	26,250			
Polytechnic and Occupational	DVE	26,200			
Distance	DNFE	117,569			
High Plateau	DNFE	20,730			
Informal	DNFE	3,227,740			
Interest Group	DNFE	90,000			
Literacy	DNFE	10,500			
Opportunity	DNFE	3,834,300			
Total		**7,062,040**			**7,062,040**

Note: all figures are derived from Chapter 2.

(a) Compensatory programmes

Compensatory programmes are strong both as regular services provided by public organizations and as special services by private and/or semi-public agencies. Three regular programmes have very large coverage, namely, school lunch (2,521,270), milk supplementary (4,845,330), and government loans (737,487); while another programme has quite large coverage - welfare services (201,365). Similarly, collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors in coping with cases under difficult circumstances show strengths in assisting abandoned children (74,802). Assistance to other difficult cases either has limited coverage or lacks statistical information for quantitative assessment.

Two observations arise out of the analysis of compensatory programmes - that broad-based schemes depend on concerted efforts of many public organizations with strong legislative support; and that fragmented assistance to cases in especially difficult circumstances lacks a strong co-ordinating public body and a unified information system whereby all agencies collaborate in collecting and supplying data to a network centre. A guideline of the Eighth National Development Plan already points out the latter and very well supports institutionalization of an information system of the disadvantaged. The success of such a system would rely on a bottom-up approach in the context of a structural reform of school governance.

(b) Basic education programmes

Basic education programmes are very strong in the Ministry of Education, as it is the principal body for universal education of the masses. The Department of Religious Affairs, through the Buddhist temples, plays a leading role in preparing young children between the ages of 3-5 years for schooling. The Pre-schooling programme for the young disadvantaged covers a good number of children (230,113). At the primary level, ONPEC is the principal organization that caters to the needs of the minority-group children and children of the poor. Altogether, the Primary school programme covers a good number of disadvantaged children countrywide (351,427). While the approach is relatively new and promising, a few practices, such as bicycle loan, have been abolished. Hopefully, these would be revived by local authorities when decentralization was fully adopted.

Alternative education (2,466,552) is commendable at the secondary level, as the Department of Non-formal Education plays a principal role, complemented by several other Ministry of Education departments. For children in especially difficult circumstances, the private groups play a viable support role in providing basic education, and the magnitude of assistance is quite promising (72,484), yet relatively small compared to their potentials. There is a real need to further promote and orchestrate the efforts of the private sectors in this respect. This is based on the reckoning that if and when formal classes are not suitable, alternative forms of education have to be sought. And this is perhaps done best by the private groups, with an inherently high degree of flexibility.

(c) Vocational education programmes

Vocational education programmes in a fully-fledged form are not many. The Department of Vocational Education is the most functional agency in programmes of this type. The Agricultural study programme (100,000) it operates is very promising, although it seems quite ambitious as it requires very intensive financial and staff support. A high total enrolment over a three-year period shows an increasing trend.

In the light of a revival of agriculture as the back-bone of the Thai economy, the programme offers a very appropriate innovation. It would contribute greatly towards self-sufficiency and sustainability. There is a trend that the innovation will be extended downward, as well as laterally, to suit the vocational needs of the poor and the disadvantaged. The challenge remains not only in the scarcity of land and capital, but also the inculcation in entrepreneurial young people to enable them to pursue self-employment.

(d) Integrated basic education and vocational training programmes

Integrated basic education and vocational training programmes are quite rare and hodge-podged. The Office of National Primary Education Commission incorporates vocational training in its opportunity secondary classes (63,942) on a rather large scale. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare usually plays a principal role in offering such programmes, but its Youth Training Programme (10,704) is apparently on a much smaller scale. Unfortunately, there are only verbal descriptions of the assistance, while needed statistics are lacking. As this is the kind of assistance provided after an initial rescue and rehabilitation of children under especially difficult circumstances, deliberate efforts are needed in continuing the assistance in the form of integrated education with a view to providing them second-chance education and integrated with skill training.

(e) Other programmes

Other programmes are diverse in nature and some of them are impressive in quantitative terms. The Educational opportunity programme (3,833,600) has very huge coverage over a period of 12 years, which ensures commitment to and continuity of the services, especially at the primary level. The Informal education programme (3,227,740) also has huge coverage, but is questionable in terms of its benefits to the disadvantaged as only hundreds of the group have direct access to it. Distance learning via satellite (117,569) and Interest group classes (90,000) are another two programmes of a good size and directly benefit disadvantaged learners. Quite sizeable are vocational programmes in polytechnics and occupational training colleges (26,200), so are vocational programmes for schools under the auspices of the Border Patrol Police Force (26,250). The Agricultural education for rural development project (4,230) under the Department of Vocational Education is small but significant as it accommodates a good number of youth participants across the country. Although the project cycle just commenced in 1999 and has not yet been completed, its design is very promising. The strengths lie in many features, such as it is institution-based, government-supported, and career-focused. There is no risk of alienating the young from the community's cultural environment.

An overview of the matrix provides the following indications:

- That public organizations having operational functions are very strong in the compensatory and basic education programmes for the disadvantaged young, and quite strong in the vocational training and integrated programmes. There is some room for more deliberate efforts in these latter two programmes, as shown by their potentials.
- That the public sector is very strong in providing second-chance education, as well as relevant vocational training, to the disadvantaged. Many provide direct access to defined groups, while others open access to voluntary learners who depend, to a very large extent, on motivation and facilitation. Overall, these are strong programmes that should be maintained and further enhanced.
- That the private sector and government organizations having co-ordination powers are active in the compensatory, basic education and integrated programmes, but are passive in the vocational training programme.
- That greater concerted efforts are needed in vocational training of the mildly disadvantaged young and children of the minority groups,

with a view to enabling them to prepare for a better life after school completion.

3. Current issues on assisting and educating the young disadvantaged

(a) Holistic approach and long-range plan

The matrix in the early part of this chapter presents a challenge in how to organize and implement the plan systematically on the basis of a holistic approach. There is a need to set national objectives on human development specific to this group. Strategies and measures need to be developed in a systematic way to lead to a unified action plan for responsible agencies and interested parties to choose in line with their own mission. Two examples exist for consideration: one is the national books development plan and the other is the national guidance and counselling plan; both are concerned with children of school age. The only question is, perhaps, how to make the plan work, the answer to which lies with other issues.

(b) Clear-cut co-ordination and linkages among public and private organizations

The matrix also points out a flaw in present practices. Generally, there exists a dividing line between public bodies in dealing with mainstream education and training for the 'mass disadvantaged', and private voluntary groups in coping with specific cases of their choosing. Opposite approaches seem to be the case between bureaucratic organizations and private groups and these lead to differences in cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency. To minimize the ill effects of such differences, clear-cut co-ordination and articulation, based on a long-range plan and a holistic approach to strategies, are to be institutionalized. Answers may be rendered by means of strengthening the functions and capacities of existing public bodies.

(c) Statistical information on disadvantaged children

In preparing this paper, it became evident that statistical information presented a problem for in-depth analyses of the assistance and education provided to disadvantaged children. Several papers submitted to organizations such as the Office of National Education Commission reflected this problem. Reports of the various organizations were not founded on the same basis, but they seemed to overlap rather than contradict each other. In the absence of national or regional co-ordination, it is rather difficult to reconcile figures.

(d) Community support and participation

In a highly centralized country such as Thailand, where educational and youth-related departments are strong in administrative power and resources allocation, community support and participation is achieved at a minimum, and mainly through innovations. In some projects, such as Basic and Occupational Education and Training undertaken by the Ministry of Education between 1994-1998, the design for implementation relies on local capacities and collaboration for achievement of the objectives. These projects proved themselves to be good examples of how community support and participation in decision-making, as well as in execution, could be tackled with high degrees of success. Most cases of disadvantaged children are identified locally and likewise should be dealt with through local support and collaboration.

(e) Curricula and activities suitable for the target groups

Pedagogies of education do not discriminate against disadvantaged children, and yet programmes for them present practical problems in areas of children's motivation and learning. Unless lessons and activities are not of the 'bookish' type, children are naturally prone to learn and cope with their own problems. Recently, the child-centred approach has become widely discussed and successfully pioneered, especially at the primary level. For people who have faith in education, the principles of this approach should be seriously studied and applied to programmes for the young disadvantaged. Here, rigid requirements in terms of syllabi, lesson plans, textbooks, instructional materials, etc. should be relaxed for the sake of authentic learning. Even in areas of skills learning, professionals and technologists should not worry about the skills the children learn. Instead, attention should be shifted to what they can acquire and make use of in their real life.

4. New paradigm to redress the issues

(a) Visioning

Considering that disadvantaged young children constitute nearly 30 per cent of the lower-secondary age group (12-14 years), or some 900,000 annually, education and training problems of this group should be tackled by local school authorities, if, and when, decentralization is implemented. As these bodies would have jurisdiction over primary and secondary schools in their respective area of responsibility, it would be appropriate to charge them with the duty and responsibilities for the education and training of this target group as an integral part of, or together with, mainstream education.

A national plan on development of disadvantaged children would spell out strategies and actions for support by central bodies and implementation by local authorities. This disadvantaged group, as well as some 50 per cent of those at the secondary level, would be provided with special assistance in compensatory, basic education, and vocational training suitable for them by local institutions. Collaboration between public agencies and private groups, both at the national and local levels, would be a norm rather than an exception, all guided by a coherent, wide-coverage national plan. These efforts would be monitored and evaluated against the indicators set forth by the national centre and modified by local bodies.

(b) Role of local authorities and community participation

Based on the Local Education Area (LEA) concept, as stipulated in the draft education Bill due mid-1999, local authorities would be responsible for implementation of innovations to be supported by local resource mobilization, collaborative efforts, and participation of stakeholders. Local authorities would submit their plans, together with the school improvement plans, for fund requisition. In return, they would supply statistical reports and information necessary for monitoring and evaluation to the juridical bodies or the national centre, whatever the case may be. It would transpire that implementation and orchestration of development activities for the disadvantaged would become the direct responsibility of local authorities. Success or failure would be an accountability issue to be taken up as an integral part of the decentralization structure. In other words, the problems of the young disadvantaged would be resolved locally by stakeholders.

(c) Role of central government agencies

A structural reform of education would result in down-sizing the existing central education departments and consolidation of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University Affairs. Basic education and preparatory vocational training would be brought under the umbrella of the Basic Education Council, whose functions would be in areas of overall policy development, strategic planning, resource allocation, technical support, and monitoring and evaluation.

On the national scene, compensatory assistance, basic education and preparatory vocational training of disadvantaged children would be co-ordinated by the Council as well. On the local scene, development plans, resource requisition, and implementation of projects and plans would be carried out by Local Education Area authorities. In this manner, a holistic approach for assistance to the disadvantaged would be facilitated. As far as the Basic Education Council is concerned, this would mean strategic coverage of the disadvantaged in all aspects and in equity terms. For the local authorities, on the other hand, this would mean collaborated, continuous and thorough assistance to the disadvantaged as their direct responsibility.

(d) Participation by the private sector

The private sector consists of community stakeholders, sponsoring agencies, and interest groups. Community stakeholders are directly involved in innovations and project activities, while sponsoring agencies mainly provide financial support and technical assistance to the disadvantaged groups identified as being in line with their objectives, orientation, resources and technical capabilities. Interest groups are militant campaigners who take deliberate efforts in locating the disadvantaged in normal or especially difficult circumstances for on-spot help and/or further remedy by existing institutions, or initiatives in novel interventions.

Decentralization would enhance these roles and increase private participation, as the physio-psychological distance between beneficiaries and assistance providers is greatly reduced. Cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency would be readily assured since the large bureaucratic structure is bypassed. It would then depend on the central organizations to encourage private participation in areas where concentration of efforts is low, or the local bodies to seek help by presenting their cases to potential sponsoring institutions.

That is to say, mobilization of resources could be effectuated both ways. In addition to planning, resource acquisition and project implementation, the local bodies could prepare their own guidelines for entry and admission, certification of specific groups with differential criteria, linkages between formal and non-formal schooling, and accommodation of the students' needs as they transfer from one institution to another. One practice to be commonly used would be student registration that would be carried out within, or as joint efforts among, local education areas. While the upward flow of information might pose some difficulties for the central bodies, it would be steady for the local offices when school boundaries became much smaller.

APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS ASSISTING DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

The *Department of General Education (DGE)* is responsible for the schooling of disadvantaged children at both the elementary and secondary levels through several types of schools of its own and in collaboration with other public departments, private organizations and foundations. Two divisions of the DGE are charged with this responsibility, namely:

1. The Division of Patron Schools has 39 schools under its jurisdiction, with 27,874 pupils and 1,486 teachers. A total of 382 are kindergarten pupils, 14,790 elementary, and 12,752 secondary. They are children of jungle men, hill tribes, boatmen, islanders, or are orphans, homeless, etc.
2. The Division of Special Schools has 41 schools under its jurisdiction, with 8,927 pupils and 723 teachers. These are children with eye, ear, mental or physical disabilities, including children with chronic illness under hospital care and rehabilitation programmes for self-reliance and normal social life.

The *Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE)* provides three programmes to cater to the needs of disadvantaged children. The programmes are:

1. Basic education for 2,307,432 children, carried out by 75,601 teachers in 1997.
2. Vocational education and training for 826,101 children carried out by 32,401 in-service teachers.
3. Informal education services through books, magazines, newspapers, bulletin boards and videotapes for an estimated 3,227,740 individuals. In 1997, the Department provided library services to the general

public and some 800 disadvantaged persons. The Department also allocated government funds to support 37,511 village libraries.

The Department has 1,006 centres of non-formal education to carry out the first two programmes.

The *Office of the Private Education Commission* provides two programmes for the needs of disadvantaged children. The programmes are entitled 'Special' and 'Patron' and are educational in nature.

1. The Special Programme includes 11 schools, with 248 teachers, accommodating 1,301 children with special needs.
2. The Patron Programme covers 22 schools that provide schooling for 9,630 children of the poor or the educationally disadvantaged. The total number of teachers in 1997 was 405.

The *Office of the National Primary Education Commission* has a mandate for basic education of the disadvantaged who live in mountainous areas. For 1998 and 1999, the Office had a plan to provide services to some 91,400 children and youth. For 4,151 children aged three to five years, pre-schooling will be provided. For 23,314 children aged six to fifteen years, various forms of help and activities are offered. Some will be accommodated in the dormitories on primary-school premises, while others will be provided transportation. Bicycle loans will be made available for those who can commute, whereas food subsistence and farming projects will be provided to the needy. Basic schooling and vocational training will also be provided to 25,748 young people aged sixteen to eighteen, and to 38,194 aged nineteen and over. All the costs will be allocated from the ONPEC's own budget.

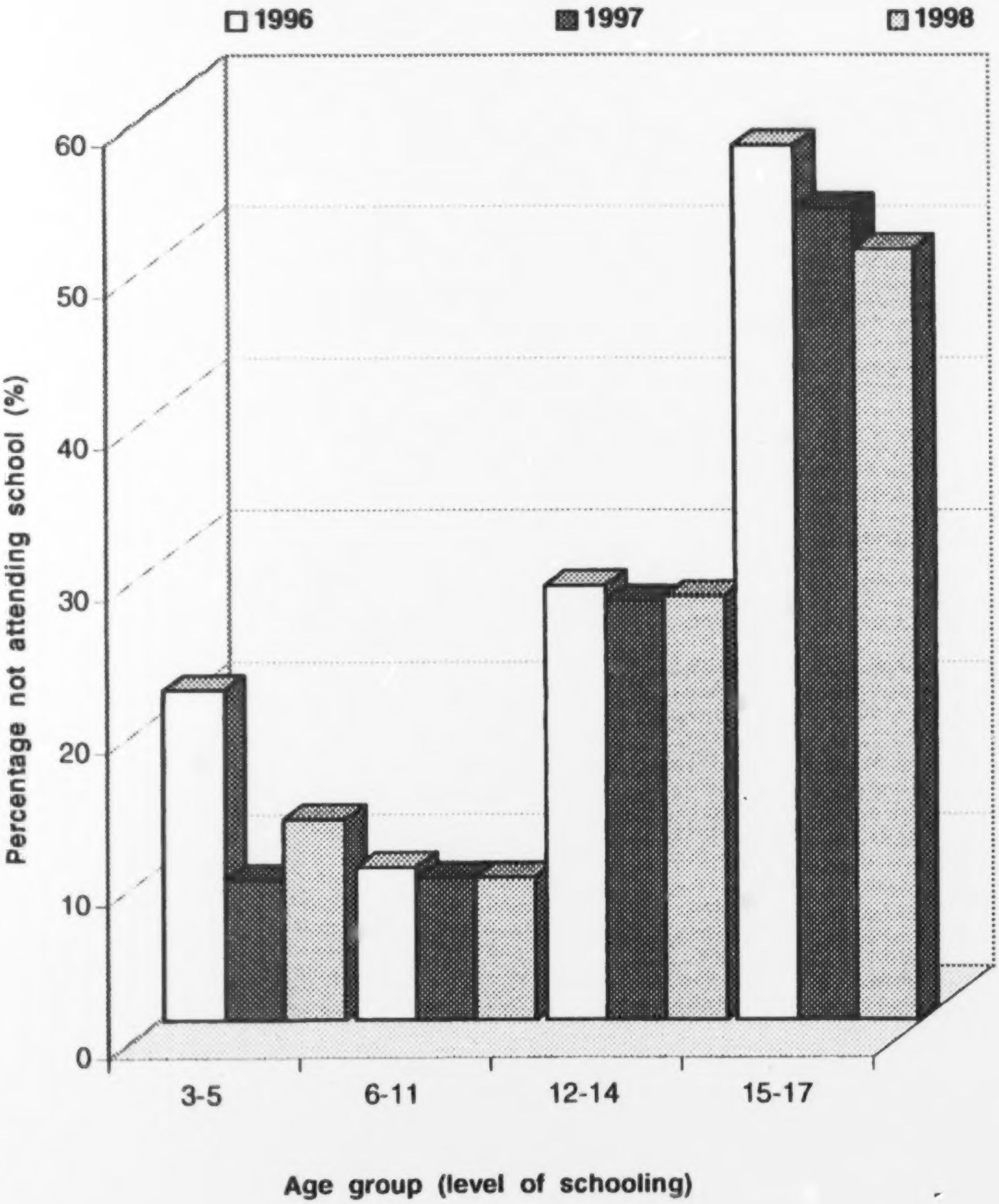
The *Department of Religious Affairs,* in collaboration with the Buddhist monks, has set up pre-school centres in the temples across the country since 1973, with a view to helping disadvantaged young children in the villages and communities. While most of the funds come from the temples, the government also provides some budget funds. In 1998, the total number of centres was 3,480, accommodating 211,337 children with 9,592 teachers. The quality of services provided to 3 to 5 year elders was entirely acceptable.

For the past 20 years, one of the salient features of the Buddhist temples' activities has been the education of the monks. They have organized both Buddhist teaching and general secondary education classes for some 70,000 monks and novices each year. These are sons of disadvantaged families, who sought education that was otherwise inaccessible. In 1998, there were 369 schools for 72,798 monks and novices, about 70 per cent of whom were in lower secondary.

In addition, the Islamic mosques also organize pre-school centres of a similar nature. The total number in 1998 was about 300, accommodating 14,243 children under the supervision of 677 teachers.

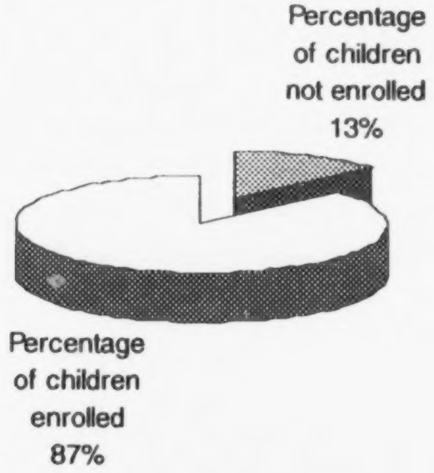
Among national NGOs that deserve mention are The Social Welfare Council and Children Development Funds and a whole host of foundations and institutes. Also, international NGOs in Thailand that provide help to disadvantaged children on a broader scale include UNICEF, the World Health Organization, CARE and World Vision.

Graph 1. Proportion of young people not attending formal school by age and by year

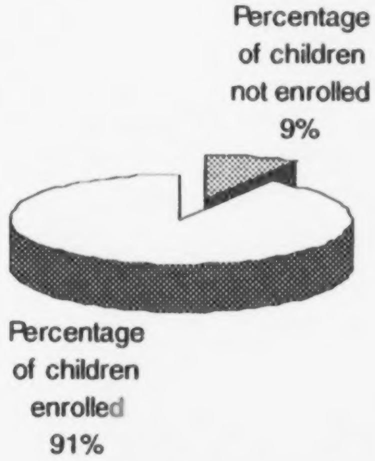


Graph 2. Percentage of children by age group not attending formal school in 1998

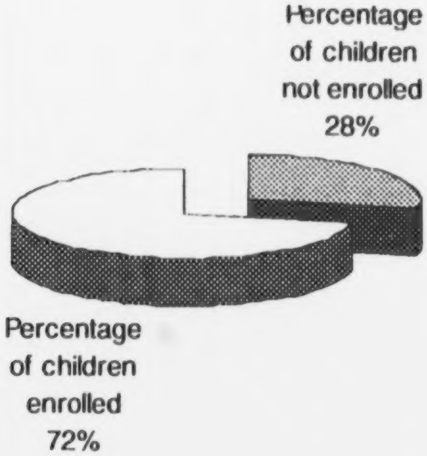
Graph 2 A.
Percentage of children aged 3-5 not attending formal school in 1998



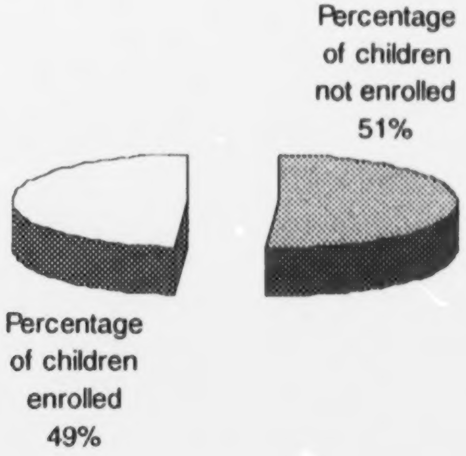
Graph 2 B.
Percentage of children aged 6-11 not attending formal school in 1998



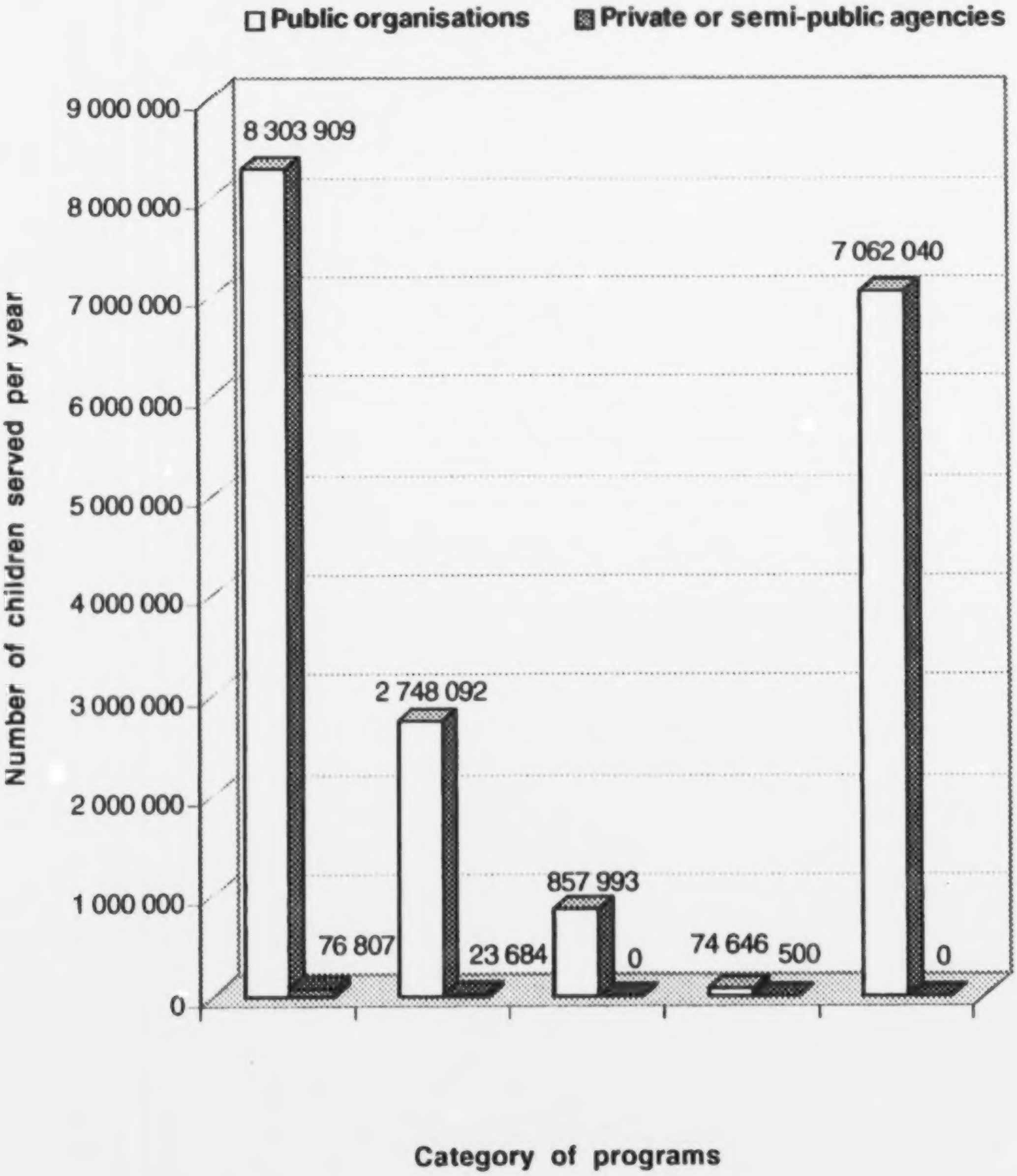
Graph 2 C.
Percentage of children aged 12-14 not attending formal school in 1998



Graph 2 D.
Percentage of children aged 15-17 not attending formal school in 1998



Graph 3. Number of children served per category of programme



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The book

This book looks at the current spectrum of programmes dealing with education for disadvantaged youth in Thailand. In spite of a lack of literature on the subject, it succeeds in bringing together and presenting a diversity of information collected from various public and private organizations.

The first chapter brings into focus the negative effects of the recent economic crisis, which has aggravated the problems of disadvantaged youth in Thailand. Chapter two analyzes the different types of programmes aimed at assisting this group, and divides these programmes into six categories: compensatory programmes, basic education programmes, vocational training programmes, integrated basic/vocational programmes, programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances and 'other types'. On this basis, policy- and strategy-related recommendations are set out in Chapter three, with a view to accommodating them into the present framework of structural and substantive reforms of the educational system of the country.

The authors conclude by highlighting the need for a clear-cut co-ordination of, and linkages between, the various actors involved and their respective roles: the development of curricula and activities (suitable to target groups) by the central authorities; a more active involvement of local authorities and communities (to bring caring for the disadvantaged nearer to their homes); and assistance from the private sector both in service and in kind.

The authors

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